

KNOWING ANICCA AND THE WAY TO NIBBĀNA



by
Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja
Sayagyi U Chit Tin

edited by
William Pruitt, Ph.D.

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In the Tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin
Dhamma Books Series 2, 2nd revised edition

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The International Meditation Centres
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in honor of the eightieth birthday
of our esteemed teacher,
Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja Sayagyi U Chit Tin*

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*Dedicated to our much revered teacher
the late Sayagyi U Ba Khin, Thray Sithu*

CONTENTS

Introduction to the First Edition	xi
Introduction to the Second Revised Edition	xiii
Ānāpāna and Vipassanā Meditation	xiv
The Precepts	xvi
Surrender	xviii
Requesting the Teachings	xix
The Technique:	xx
Ānāpāna Meditation	xx
Vipassanā Meditation	xxi
Day One: Morning Discourse	
Act in Such a Way That You Increase Your Wisdom	1
The Triple Refuge	1
The Teacher	4
The Story of the Elder Poṭhila	6
A Note About Belief	9
The Story of Pukkusāti	10
Tranquillity and Insight	13
The Seven Bhikkhus' Supreme Effort	14
Day One: Evening Discourse	
Morality, Concentration and Insight	17
The Noble Eightfold Path	19
The Story of Mahādhana	26
Samādhi	29
Paññā	31
Practising Ānāpāna	31
Day Two: Morning Discourse	
The Discourse on the Setting in Motion of the Wheel of the Dhamma	35
The Middle Way	35
The Noble Eightfold Path	35
The Four Noble Truths	36
The Twelve Aspects of the Four Noble Truths	37

The Awakening of Koṇḍañña and the Rejoicing of the Devas and Brahmās	39
Aññāta-Koṇḍañña's Ordination	40
The Background to the Teaching of the First Sermon	40
The Story of Sātāgira, Hemavata, and Kālī	43
Controlling the Mind	45
The Seven Stages of Purification	46
Mindfulness of Breathing	47
Day Two: Evening Discourse	
Taming the Mind	52
The Gradual Training (Discourse Taught to Gaṇaka- Moggallāna)	53
The Necessity to Walk Along the Path	55
Mindfulness of Breathing	56
Day Three: Morning Discourse	
The Summum Bonum	66
The Story of Jotika	69
The Five Hindrances	69
Those Who Are Becoming Ariyas	74
The Story of Mātikāmātā	75
On Being Cautious	77
Mother Sayamagyi's Beginnings in Meditation and Teaching	78
Day Three: Evening Discourse	
The Importance of Restraining the Senses, Mahākāla and Cullakāla	82
The Five Hindrances	86
1. Sensuous desire	87
2. Ill Will	91
3. Sloth and Torpor	91
4. Restlessness and Worry	92
5. Doubt	93
The Advantage of Abandoning the Five Hindrances	94
Developing the <i>Jhāna</i> Factors	96

Day Four: Morning Discourse

Cūlapanthaka	99
Tranquillity of Mind	108
Advice from Venerable Webu Sayadaw	110

Day Four: Evening Discourse

The Heedful Illumine the World	114
The Advantages of Ānāpāna	115
The Two Chief Disciples	119
The Buddha's Advice to King Pasenadi	123
Preparing for Awakening	124
Too Much Effort, the Case of Soṇa	127

Day Five: Morning Discourse

The Story of Cakkupāla	130
The Story of Maṭṭhakundali	132
The Story of Patācārā	134
The Four Noble Truths	138

Day Five: Evening Discourse

Ti-lakkhaṇa: Meditating on the Three Characteristics ...	144
Full Understanding Through Investigating	147
Radical Change and Subtle Change	147
Pañca-kkhandhā, The Five Aggregates	150
Mind and Body	150
Matter	151
Mind	152

Day Six: Morning Discourse

Seeing the Deathless State	160
The Story of Kisā-Gotamī	160
The Story of Mother Visākhā	162
Suffering (<i>Dukkha</i>)	164
The Experience of Dr Wright	170

Day Six: Evening Discourse

Straighten Your Fickle Mind	174
The Importance of Following the Teacher's Advice ...	174
The First Condition Conducive to Emancipation:	
The Good Friend	175
The Story of Jotipāla	177

The Story of Devadatta and Ajātasattu	177
The Second Condition: Morality	179
The Third Condition: Listening to the Doctrine	179
The Fourth Condition: Practising the Dhamma	181
The Fifth Condition: Insight	181
No-self (Anattā)	183
On Belief, the Discourse to the Kālāmas	186
Day Seven: Morning Discourse	
The Path of Purification	190
Awareness of Impermanence	193
Kalāpas	194
The Ten Levels of Insight Knowledge	197
Meditating as Laymen	198
The Three Erroneous Ways of Observing	201
Erroneous Observation through Perception	202
Erroneous Observation through Thought	203
Erroneous Observation through Views	204
The Three Types of Erroneous Thought	205
The Two Dogmatic Beliefs	207
The Two Stages	208
The Two Destinations	209
Day Seven: Evening Discourse	
The Radiance of Meditation	213
The Story of the Herdsman Nanda	214
Right Understanding	215
Right Contemplation	223
Dependent Origination	224
Day Eight: Morning Discourse	
Being One's Own Refuge	231
The Story of Kumāra-Kassapa and His Mother	232
The Allegory of the Anthill	234
The Seven Factors of Awakening	237
The Seven Stages of Purification	240
Types of Buddhists	250
Day Eight: Evening Discourse	
The Ten Soldiers of Māra	255

Day Nine: Morning Discourse

Right Veneration, Right Protection, Right Concentration .	274
The Story of Attadattha	274
The Buddha's Advice to Ānanda	275
The Tittira Jātaka	276
Protecting Oneself and Protecting Others	280
The Story of Dīghāvu	282
The Story of the Two Acrobats	287
The Four Applications of Mindfulness	293

Day Nine: Evening Discourse

The Message Taught by All the Buddhas	296
The Perfections (Pāramīs)	297
The Graduated Teaching	299
The Discourse to the Villagers of Veḷudvāra	300
The Story of Vessantara	302
The Buddha's Last Life	303
The Great Renunciation	304
The Ascetic Practices	306
The Awakening	307
The Thirty-One Planes of Existence	310

Day Ten: Morning Discourse

Overcoming Opposition	314
The Practice of Loving Kindness	314
The Story of the Weaver's Daughter	319
The Story of the Hungry Farmer	324
Developing the Divine Abidings	327

Introduction to the First Edition

These discourses are for the use of people who are serious students of Vipassanā Meditation as taught by Sayagyi U Ba Khin. They include the morning and evening discourses for ten-day courses and were first used at the International Meditation Centre in the United Kingdom.

The discourses are based on the Pāli texts, both the canon and the commentaries, especially the most important commentary for the meditator, the Visuddhimagga [*The Path of Purification*] by Ashin Mahā-Buddhaghosa. The writings and teachings of Venerable Ledi Sayadaw, Venerable Webu Sayadaw, and, in particular, almost all the works in English of our teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin were also primary sources. In addition, some texts published by *The Wheel* (Sri Lanka) and *The Light of the Dhamma* (Myanmar) have been useful. Every effort has been made to be consistent in the English translation of Pāli words, and this has meant making some changes in the translations used. We owe a great deal to the dedicated work that has gone into the translations published by the Pali Text Society, the Buddhist Publication Society of Sri Lanka, the Buddha-Sāsana Council of Myanmar, and to the works of Mahā-Theras and lay Buddhists that have been published by these societies. Sources have been acknowledged wherever possible. We follow the Chaṭṭhasaṅgītipiṭaka edition (Myanmar, 1972) for the Pāli quotations from the Dhammapada.

These discourses, therefore, are based on the Buddha's Teachings, just as Sayagyi's teachings and life were based on the Buddha's Teachings. Experience has shown that these Teachings cannot be changed and adapted. They deal with the fundamental workings of the human mind and body. The fundamentals are the same no matter what country a person

lives in or during which period he lives. Experiencing ultimate reality may help us to understand new facts of the world around us, but nothing can be added to or taken away from ultimate reality.

The primary aim of these talks is to help a student in Vipassanā to work more effectively. They are not meant to serve only for theoretical understanding. Many students have found them to be useful in their meditation on ten-day courses and have asked for copies so that they could consult them in their daily lives to help their understanding and to inspire them to continue working. It is with this in mind that we have had them printed.

Acknowledgments. I wish to thank Dr William Pruitt for his help in preparing this edition of these talks. He has very thoroughly revised and edited the entire manuscripts with great faith and devotion. I also wish to thank the late Mr Peter Moll, Mr Craig Storti, Mr Buz Hargraves, and the Study Group of the International Meditation Centre, U.K., for their help.

These Dhamma Talks are printed and published for distribution to meditation students in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin and not for commercial purposes.

It is our hope that these talks may serve for the welfare of many!

Sayagyi U Chit Tin
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Australia
January 19, 1989

Introduction to the Second Revised Edition

The talks in the first edition of this book were designed to be used on ten-day meditation retreats that began with three days of Ānāpāna Meditation. There was a period when students who came to Myanmar to meditate at the International Meditation Centre could only obtain seven-day visas, so a shorter period was used for developing concentration through mindfulness of breathing. Sayagyi U Ba Khin always taught five days of *ānāpāna* before introducing his students to Vipassanā Meditation. There were a few exceptions, but only in the case of students who were doing unusually well right from the beginning.

After teaching outside Myanmar for a number of years, we have found that students need to work more on their concentration, so we now teach five days of *ānāpāna*, just as Sayagyi did. A number of changes have been made in the talks to reflect this: Some new talks or portions of talks have been added. Some material has been deleted. And we have also taken advantage of this new edition to correct any errors that have been noted.

Sayagyi U Chit Tin
International Meditation Centre
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January 19, 1995

Ānāpāna and Vipassanā Meditation

A ten-day course in Buddhist Meditation in the Theravāda tradition as taught by Sayagyi U Ba Khin begins with (1) taking the Triple Refuge, (2) taking on five or eight moral precepts, (3) surrendering to the Buddha and Teachers, and (4) making a formal request to the teacher to be taught the technique. These are explained in the talks, but we wish to give here a brief introduction together with the texts used in Pāli and their English translation. The basics of the technique will also be explained.

The Triple Refuge is the Buddha (the Awakened One), the Dhamma (the Teachings of the Buddha), and the Saṅgha (the Community of those who practise and preserve the Teachings). The Triple Refuge was taken by people at the time of the Buddha when they had learned enough of his teachings to be convinced of the truth of the Buddha-Dhamma. There were many other teachings (*dhammā*) at that time, and by saying that they took refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma discovered by him, and in the Saṅgha, people showed that they had faith in these three as their true protection. In doing this, they showed that they no longer followed other teachings (*dhammā*). That is why we are careful to specify that by Dhamma we mean exclusively the Buddha-Dhamma.

Many people who heard a discourse given by the Buddha would say at the end that they wished to take refuge in the Triple Gem for the remainder of their lives. In a ten-day course, however, it is expected that the sincere student take refuge for the ten-day period as a minimum. Whether or not he continues to rely on the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha in his day-to-day life depends entirely on him. As we point out in the

discourses, a certain amount of faith is necessary if one is to make a fair trial of this technique. Continued faith will depend on the results that come through personal experience during the trial period.

The Pāli for taking refuge in the Triple Gem (*ti-ratana*) or the Triple Refuge (*ti-saraṇa*) is:

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.
Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.
Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.

The translation into English is:

I go for refuge to the Awakened One.
 I go for refuge to the Teachings.
 I go for refuge to the Community.

When we take refuge in the Buddha, we take refuge in the human being who discovered the way himself, without being taught by someone else.¹ He was fully awakened or enlightened and taught others how to become awakened. The special qualities of the Buddha include the following: he is accomplished, fully awakened, endowed with clear vision and virtuous conduct, sublime, the knower of worlds, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, the teacher of *devas* and men, awakened, and blessed.

The Teachings (Dhamma) of the Buddha entail the elimination of desire—the Path leading to Awakening. It is well proclaimed by the Buddha, visible here and now, timeless, inviting investigation, onward-leading, and can be directly

¹This discussion of the three refuges is based on the commentary found in the *Illustrator of Ultimate Meaning*, translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (pp. 4–16) and his translation of the *Path of Purification* (Ch. VII, ¶¶2–100). We have translated some Pāli terms differently, however, in order to be consistent.

experienced by the wise. The word *dhamma* has many different meanings in Pāli. Here, the meanings included are the Teachings of the Buddha as found in the texts and which can be summed up by the Four Noble Truths. These Teachings last during the time of the Buddha's Dispensation (Buddha-sāsana). In its largest sense, Dhamma includes the ten Supramundane States (*lokuttara dhammā*), which are the Paths and Fruition States of the four stages of Awakening, Nibbāna, and being accomplished in the Doctrine (*pariyatti*).

The Community (Saṅgha) as a refuge means the Community in the ultimate sense. It means the community of the Buddha's disciples who have entered on the good way, the straight way, the true way, the proper way. This means those who have attained the Paths and Fruition States of the four stages of awakening. This is the community of disciples that is worthy of gifts, hospitality, offerings, respect, and that is an incomparable field of merit for the world.

A few similes may help to give a better idea of these three gems. The Buddha is like a trainer of thoroughbred horses. The Dhamma is like the method to be used in training. The Saṅgha is like a large group of well-disciplined thoroughbreds. Or: the Buddha is like a physician who can cure the illness of defilement caused by underlying tendencies. The Dhamma is the medicine that is used correctly. The Saṅgha is like people who have been cured by applying the medicine correctly. Or: the Buddha is like a good guide. The Dhamma is like a good path to a land of safety. The Saṅgha is like those who enter the path and reach the land of safety.

The Precepts. The moral precepts are necessary if you are to be able to develop concentration. If your mind is distracted through regrets over wrong deeds, it will not be able to settle down and remain fixed on a given object. For Buddhist

laymen, the five precepts are considered the minimum rules that should be respected at all times. New students of meditation are expected to keep these precepts. In day-to-day life, the third precept for laymen entails refraining from unlawful sexual relations, meaning no sexual relations outside marriage. During a ten-day course, however, this precept for students is to maintain complete chastity. The five precepts during a meditation course, therefore, are as follows:

- (1) *Pānātipātā varamaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
- (2) *Adinn' ādānā varamaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
- (3) *Abrahmacariyā varamaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
- (4) *Musāvādā varamaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
- (5) *Surā-meraya-majja-pamādāṭṭhānā varamaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

In English:¹

- (1) I undertake the training precept of abstention from killing breathing beings.
- (2) I undertake the training precept of abstention from taking what is not given.
- (3) I undertake the training precept of abstention from unchastity.
- (4) I undertake the training precept of abstention from speaking falsehood.
- (5) I undertake the training precept of abstention from any opportunity for negligence due to liquor, wine, and besotting drink.

Students who have already taken a ten-day course add these additional precepts:

- (6) *Vikāla-bhojanā varamaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

¹This translation is based on Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli's *Minor Readings*.

(7) *Nacca-gīta-vāḍita-visūka-dassanā mālā-gandha-vilepana-dhāraṇa-maṇḍana-vibhūsanatṭhānā varamaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

(8) *Uccā-sayana-mahā-sayanā varamaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

In English:

(6) I undertake the training precept of abstention from untimely eating (i.e., after noon).

(7) I undertake the training precept of abstention from dancing, singing, music, contortionist shows, from any opportunity for wearing garlands, smartening with scents, and embellishment with unguents.

(8) I undertake the training precept of abstention from (the use of) high couches and large couches.

Surrender. After taking the Triple Refuge and the precepts, the student surrenders to the Buddha and the teacher. Ashin Buddhaghosa explains how this should be done in the *Path of Purification*.¹ The Pāli text is:

Imāhaṃ bhante attabhāvaṃ jīvitam Bhagavato paricca-jami.

Imāhaṃ bhante attabhāvaṃ jīvitam acariyasa paricca-jami.

In English:

Reverend sir, I relinquish this my person to the Blessed One (the Buddha).

Reverend sir, I relinquish this my person to the teacher.

Ashin Buddhaghosa says that in surrendering to the Buddha, the meditator will be free from fear which might

¹Chapter III, ¶¶123–130.

cause him to return to the world, take up the wrong kind of search and come to ruin. Through surrender, even if a frightening object appears to the meditator, he will not be afraid. In fact, joy will arise in him as he reflects, "Have you not wisely dedicated yourself already to the Buddha?" He is like a man with a valuable piece of cloth. If the cloth were eaten by rats or moths, he would grieve. But if he gave the cloth to a bhikkhu who needed robes, he would feel only joy if he saw the bhikkhu rip the cloth up to make his robe.

If a meditator does not dedicate himself to the teacher, he will become unresponsive to correction, hard to speak to, and unamenable to advice, or he will go where he likes without asking the teacher. The teacher will not be able to help him with material things or with the Dhamma and will be unable to train him in his meditation. Without such help, the meditator will not gain a firm footing in the Buddha's Dispensation (Buddha-sāsana). If he dedicates himself to the teacher, he will not be unresponsive to correction and will not go about as he likes, will be easy to speak to, and will live in dependence on the teacher. The teacher will be able to help him, and he will attain growth, increase, and fulfilment in the Dispensation.

Requesting the Teachings. Finally, the student requests the teacher to instruct him in a meditation subject. Ashin Buddhaghosa says that the student should ask for a meditation subject with a sincere inclination of heart and with sincere resolution. A sincere inclination of heart means being inclined to non-greed, non-hate, non-delusion, renunciation, seclusion, and relinquishment. Those who have attained one of the four stages of awakening, Pacceka Buddhas and Teaching Buddhas, past, present, and future, all attain their states through these six inclinations.

Being whole-heartedly resolved means being resolved upon, respecting, and being inclined to concentration and Nibbāna. Ashin Buddhaghosa's explanation makes clear the importance of making Nibbāna our goal. Sayagyi U Ba Khin insisted on this also. That is why we take Nibbāna as our goal right from the beginning and do not work for the unstable peace associated with deep concentration (*jhāna*).

For Ānāpāna Meditation the request is as follows:

*Nibbānassa sacchi-karanatthāya me bhante: ānāpāna
kammaṭṭhānaṃ dehi.*

In English:

Reverend sir, please teach me Ānāpāna Meditation so that
I may experience the Nibbānic Peace within.

For Vipassanā Meditation the request is as follows:

*Nibbānassa sacchi-karanatthāya me bhante: vipassanā
kammaṭṭhānaṃ dehi.*

In English:

Reverend sir, please teach me Vipassanā Meditation so
that I may experience the Nibbānic Peace within.

The Technique: Ānāpāna Meditation. This is mindfulness of in-breaths and out-breaths, which develops concentration. You should be comfortably seated, keeping the back and head straight. Students generally sit cross-legged on a cushion on the floor, but a chair may be used if this proves to be too difficult. You should avoid leaning against the wall or against the back of the chair, as this is conducive to sleepiness. After meditating for some time, however, it can be helpful occasionally to lean against something for a short time and to stretch the legs.

You should keep the eyes closed in order to avoid being distracted by visual objects. The attention should be placed below the nose and above the upper lip, in the general area where the breath touches as you breathe in and breathe out. There are three elements to be noted: (1) the fact that you are breathing in as you breathe in, (2) the fact that you are breathing out as you breathe out, (3) the spot where the air touches (and, if possible, the sensation resulting from the touch of the breath).

Feeling the touch of the breath will vary in locality and in intensity from time to time and from person to person. The important thing is to be aware of the touch and the direction of the breath. If no sensation is apparent, then the attention should simply be maintained in the general area directly below the nose. One should not try to imagine a sensation if there is no feeling apparent. If it is not possible to breathe through the nose due to a cold, etc., the attention should still be placed below the nose, above the upper lip.

Although it is not mentioned in the texts, you can help establish mindfulness by a few intentional breaths, breathing a little harder than normal—but not so much so that others will be distracted. Once the mind is well established on the spot, you should return to normal breathing. Another aid when the mind wanders is to note “In” as you breathe in and “Out” as you breathe out. These words should only be noted mentally, however.

Generally speaking, you should constantly come back to the object of concentration as soon as you are aware that your mind has wandered off, avoiding self-criticism and struggle. The Buddha said that nothing is as difficult to tame as the mind, so you should not be surprised if your mind wanders.

Vipassanā Meditation. After developing concentration to a certain extent, the student is ready to move on to developing

insight (*vipassanā*) into the ultimate reality of his mind and body. The technique used in this tradition is to concentrate on each part of the body in a systematic fashion, to note whatever sensation, if any, is occurring in that part of the body, and to be aware that the sensation is impermanent (*anicca*).

We go through the body, being aware of the sensations from head to foot. At times, more attention may be placed at the three extremities: the top of the head, the palms of the hands, and the soles of the feet. When one has difficulty maintaining the attention in the body, it is necessary to move the attention quickly. At other times, one can dwell more on each part, probing more deeply into the sensation. Care should be taken not to allow strong sensations to pull the attention away from where you are concentrating. And equal time should be given as one goes through the body to each part (with the exception of the extremities). This holds true even if no sensation is obvious. One does not create or imagine sensations or get involved in physical anatomy. The technique is to be aware of whatever sensation manifests itself, or, if nothing is noticed, to maintain the attention in that particular part of the body for the necessary length of time.

It is particularly important that you remain unperturbed. The mind should observe the sensations equanimously. You should not be elated or dejected by any sensation. At times, repeating mentally “*Anicca*” may help to keep the attention in the body and to observe the changing nature of each sensation with equanimity. When concentration is poor, it is necessary to return to *ānāpāna* for a time. Once the mind is able to remain where it is placed, you can go back to *vipassanā*.

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa.

*Praise to that One, the Blessed One, the Noble One, the
Perfectly Self-Awakened One.*

DAY ONE: MORNING DISCOURSE

Act in such a way that you increase your wisdom

*Yogā ve jāyatī bhūri; ayogā bhūrisaṅkhayo;
Etaṃ dvedhā pathaṃ ñatvā bhavāya vibhavāya ca
Tathā 'ttānaṃ niveseyya yathā bhūri pavaḍḍhati.*

Verily, from meditation arises wisdom. Without meditation wisdom wanes. Knowing this twofold path of gain and loss, let one so conduct himself that wisdom may increase.

Dhammapada v. 282

We're gathered here to do a course of meditation. You have resolved to undergo a full ten-day course. You left your home, your work, your busy activities and your beloved family, if you have a family, for a retreat with the hope of attaining Awakening, just like the Noble Ones of olden days.

The Triple Refuge

In our "Introduction to Vipassanā Meditation" we have said: A most essential part of the programme is the preliminary formalities of attuning the students to the energies and forces of Full Awakening (the Buddha) by taking refuge in the Triple Gem (the Buddha or the Awakened One, the Dhamma or the Truth taught by the Buddha, and the Saṅgha or the Community of those who keep the teachings alive). The continuity of

this attunement is sustained through surrendering to the Buddha and the Teacher for protection and guidance during the period of training.

So we begin our course by taking refuge in the Buddha, the Awakened One; the Dhamma, the Doctrine taught by the Buddha; and the Saṅgha, the Community of those who practise the Buddha's teaching and who have perpetuated the Dhamma for more than twenty-five centuries. We entrust ourselves to the Buddha and teachers for protection and guidance. We take the moral precepts. Finally, we request the teachers to teach us Ānāpāna meditation.

Now what is the meaning of the Triple Refuge? A refuge means a safe place, a place where we will not be harmed. We approach the three qualities embodied in the Triple Gem because we'll find safety through them.

The first gem is the Buddha. The word Buddha means Awakened One and this includes the sense of being self-awakened. And the Buddha is the personification of the state of being Awakened. Gotama was able to work until he dispelled all his ignorance, until he understood the ultimate reality of the world.

This ultimate reality is the second gem: the Dhamma, the Doctrine, i.e., the Truth—the Truth that is summed up in the Four Noble Truths taught by the Buddha.

The Buddha discovered that all conditioned states are unsatisfactory, that there's a cause for this, that there's an alternative in the unconditioned state, and that there's a Path leading to this state of liberation.

The third gem is the Saṅgha, the Order of Bhikkhus. By this is meant the Ariya-Saṅgha, the Community of the Noble Ones, those who have won the Four Paths and the Four Fruition States of liberation. The Sammuti-Saṅgha is also included. This is the Community of Bhikkhus who practise

the Doctrine, who keep it alive and available for those seeking a way out of their suffering.

We want to approach our work like a scientist searching for the truth. He'll begin with a working hypothesis, and he'll set up experiments to test his hypothesis. The experiments will give results which will confirm his hypothesis or prove it to be wrong. The students aren't expected to believe anything they're told here. They're only asked to do their experiments properly so that the results will be helpful to them. If a scientist is not careful in his work and does not do his experiments properly, he'll never know if his hypothesis is right or wrong.

The Buddha said in the Kālāma Sutta:

Do not believe what you have heard. Do not believe traditions because they have been handed down for many generations; do not believe anything because it is rumoured and spoken by many; do not believe merely because a written statement of some old sage is produced; do not believe in conjectures; do not believe in that as Truth to which you have become attached by habit; do not believe merely the authority of your teachers or elders. After observation and analysis, when it agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and gain of one and all, then accept it and live up to it.

The Gradual Sayings, I 170-175

Similarly, Sayagyi U Ba Khin said in his talks *What Buddhism Is*:

Pray do not therefore believe me when I come to the philosophical issues until and unless you are convinced of what I say either as a sequel to proper reasoning or by means of a practical approach.

We therefore say, do not believe us until and unless you've convinced yourselves by a practical approach and by actually experiencing the benefits of the teaching. However, we begin with a certain amount of faith (*saddhā*) or confidence in the Teacher, the Buddha. We take as a working hypothesis that it's possible to be Awakened, that the Truth can be known, and that there are those who keep the knowledge of the Truth alive so that others can benefit from it. But our faith must be balanced with knowledge. As we work we'll gain the right amount of knowledge to enable us to make progress on the Path to the Awakened State. Only after attaining the goal will our faith be perfect.

So when we take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, we take refuge in their respective qualities: the quality of being Awakened, which is perfect peace and happiness; the quality of the Four Noble Truths, which enable us to attain liberation; and the quality of the good conduct, the wise conduct, the upright conduct of the Community of those who have walked the Path shown by the Awakened One and who have realized ultimate reality.

The Teacher

In addition to taking refuge in the Triple Gem, we put ourselves under the protection of the Buddha and the teacher during the period of training. If we use the comparison of the scientist, we're like a scientist who's in training. We need a teacher to show us how to formulate a working hypothesis and how to set up an experiment and how to judge the results. If we are to learn we must work properly, and to work properly we need someone who can advise us and answer our questions. This doesn't mean that you're asked to have blind devotion. You won't be asked to do anything unreasonable. At times we may feel like a schoolboy who'd rather be out

playing ball instead of learning his lessons. But if we remember that the teacher is passing on a teaching that has been practised by countless numbers of people who have found it to lead to the end of suffering, and that the teacher isn't asking us to do anything that hasn't been tried and tested, then we will appreciate that we need a teacher.

Then we took the moral precepts, the Five Precepts or the Eight Precepts. We also made a formal request to be taught Ānāpāna meditation. Soon after his Awakening, the Buddha looked around at the world and saw that it would not be an easy matter to teach what he had learned. As an Awakened Being he was beyond desires, and although he had great pity and compassion for all those he saw suffering, the Buddha hesitated as to whether or not to teach. Fortunately for us, just at that moment he was approached by the Brahmā Sahampati, who requested that he teach the Dhamma. From that moment there was never again any hesitation. The Buddha taught everyone who made a sincere request. And that's why you were asked to do likewise.

You notice we say a "sincere request." Sayagyi U Ba Khin was a very important person in Myanmar. When Myanmar gained independence on January 4, 1948, U Ba Khin was named the Accountant General. He taught meditation to the people who worked in his office if they asked to be taught. But he knew that some people wouldn't ask because they wanted to learn to meditate but in the hope that they might gain favours from him. So he devised a way to test them to find out if they were genuinely interested. He mentioned that he would test such students. He told his disciples to tell prospective students that they would be required to run around the block where the Accountant General's office was. It was a distance of about one kilometer or six-tenths of a mile. Some would have to run around the block once, some twice, and some

three times. This was a test of their sincerity. If they were willing to do that, it was an indication they were not too full of pride and that they were flexible enough to work as they should. But Sayagyi never had to make anyone run around the block. The word got around and the people who were tempted to come out of ulterior motives decided not to come.

The Story of the Elder Poṭhila

Sayagyi used to tell the story of the Elder Poṭhila who lived during the time of the Buddha and who suffered from too much pride.¹ Poṭhila was a very learned bhikkhu. He had lived as a scholarly bhikkhu under seven Buddhas and had taught the scriptures to five hundred bhikkhus during the time of Buddha Gotama. The Buddha saw that he was ready to work for final liberation. But he realized that Poṭhila had never considered working to escape from suffering. He would need to be stirred up. From then on the Buddha referred to him as Empty-headed Poṭhila (Tucca-Poṭhila). “Come, Empty-headed Poṭhila,” the Buddha would say. “Pay respects, Empty-headed Poṭhila; sit, Empty-headed Poṭhila; go, Empty-headed Poṭhila.”

Poṭhila thought to himself, “I’m versed in all the Teachings of the Buddha (the three Piṭakas) and the commentaries on the Teachings; I instruct five hundred bhikkhus; and yet the Teacher calls me Empty-headed Poṭhila.” So he decided it was time for him to enter the forest and devote himself to meditation. For that, he needed a meditation subject; he had to ask someone to teach him the technique. He went to a forest monastery where thirty bhikkhus were residing. He paid his

¹For the story see *Buddhist Legends*, III 157–159.

respects to the oldest bhikkhu, as was proper, and said, "Venerable sir, be my refuge."

But the Elder said to him, "Brother, you're a preacher of the Doctrine; it is I who should learn from you." Poṭhila then said, "Venerable sir, please don't treat me in this manner. Please be my refuge."

Now all thirty bhikkhus in that monastery were fully Awakened, Arahats, and they too were able to realize Poṭhila's problem. So the senior Elder thought to himself, "This monk has too much pride because of his learning." Therefore he told Poṭhila to go to the monk who was second in seniority. The second bhikkhu sent Poṭhila to the bhikkhu beneath him, and so on down the line, until finally he was sent to a seven-year-old novice who was sitting in his day quarters doing some sewing. Each refusal was a blow to Poṭhila's pride. Even the seven-year-old novice, who was also an Arahāt, refused his request at first, but finally said, "Venerable sir, I'll be your refuge provided you patiently endure admonition."

Poṭhila answered, "Good sir, I will do so. If you tell me to enter a fire I'll enter it."

The novice looked at Poṭhila, who was wearing very valuable robes, and he said to him, "Sir, plunge into this pool of water, robes and all." Poṭhila plunged into the water. As soon as the novice saw the Elder's robes were dripping, he told him to approach. Poṭhila had passed the test and shown that his mind was now pliable enough to understand and follow instructions.

"Venerable sir," the novice said, "if there were an anthill with six holes and a man wished to catch a lizard that had entered one of the holes, he'd block up five holes, leaving the sixth open. And thus he could catch the lizard. You should do that, dealing similarly with the six doors of the senses. Close

five of the six doors and devote your attention to the door of the mind.”

“That will suffice, good sir,” Poṭhila said. Because he was so learned, the words of the novice were like someone lighting a lamp. He began to meditate, concentrating on his body. The Buddha observed Poṭhila meditating and thought to himself, “This bhikkhu must establish himself so that he becomes a man of great wisdom.” The Teacher sent forth a luminous image of himself and spoke the verse we gave at the beginning of this talk, and this verse gave Poṭhila the added boost he needed. At the conclusion of the stanza, Poṭhila was fully Awakened, an Arahāt.

So from this story we can see how important it is for the student to have humility. And we can see how important it is to approach a competent teacher. In this case the teacher was a seven-year-old novice, but he was fully Awakened, and because he was Awakened, he had more understanding than a very educated bhikkhu. Ashin Buddhaghosa, who wrote the most important commentary concerning meditation, *The Path of Purification*, tells us how to choose a teacher. He tells us that while he is available, only a meditation subject taken from the Buddha is well taken. After his final Nibbāna it’s proper to take it from any one of the two Chief Disciples or the eighty great disciples still living. When they are no longer available, if someone who is fully Awakened is available—an Arahāt—we should approach such a person. Now there are four stages from the first taste of being Awakened to the final stage, and so if an Arahāt cannot be found, we should go to someone who has reached one of the other stages: a Non-Returner, a Once-Returner, or a Stream-Winner. If none of these is to be found, we should go to an ordinary man who has obtained the absorption states, the *jhānas*, then to one who knows the canon (the Piṭakas)—either all three collections, or two, or

one. Next, if there is no one like these, we should approach someone who knows one section of the canon with the commentary explaining it. “For a teacher such as this,” Buddhaghosa says, “who knows the texts, guards the heritage, and protects the tradition, will follow the teacher’s opinion rather than his own.”¹

A Note About Belief

I’d like to add a note here concerning these discourses. I’ll be telling you many stories concerning events during the life of the Buddha, and there may be events that are difficult for you to believe. As Sayagyi pointed out to an American student when explaining the thirty-one planes of existence, from the highest Brahmic plane to the lowest hell, “When I talk about these planes of existence I don’t mean that you should believe in that. You might believe in the existence of heaven and hell. But these details you will believe when you can develop your power of mind to a state when you open the gate and see all the living beings of the thirty-one planes of existence. I have trained a number of people to see that. You understand? Then only will you believe.”

Sayagyi also said, “I don’t request anybody to believe anything unless they see it, unless they experience it. So you are not here to believe me. The Buddha said, ‘Don’t believe even me.’ You experience for yourself. And you find out whether what you experience is good and whether it is for your well-being. If it is for your well-being, you can accept it. If it’s not for your well-being, then you will not accept it. So the training here will be through experience.” This was the way Sayagyi taught and the way we teach here. But it is

¹See *The Path of Purification*, Ch. III, ¶¶ 61–65.

important that the teachings be done correctly and that we be faithful to what the Buddha taught. So, in illustrating the talks with stories from the canon, we will remain as faithful as possible to the original. If we begin leaving out parts of the stories simply because we are afraid the students will not believe everything, we will end up distorting the teachings. When we give brief versions of stories, it will be because we have used only the part that illustrates what we are discussing.

The Story of Pukkusāti

Here's another story that illustrates the proper attitude towards the teaching and the teacher. Ashin Buddhaghosa, in his comments on the Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta, gives the account of Pukkusāti, who was king of Takkaṣiḷa and a contemporary of King Bimbisāra.¹ A friendly alliance was established between these two kings and at one time Pukkusāti sent, as gifts, eight priceless garments in lacquered caskets. As there was no other material which Bimbisāra considered precious enough to send in return, he conceived the idea of acquainting Pukkusāti with the appearance in the world of the Triple Gem: the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. He had inscribed on a golden plate, four cubits long and a span in breadth, descriptions of the Triple Gem and the other tenets of the Buddha's Teachings, such as the Discourse on Mindfulness, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the Thirty-Seven Factors of Awakening. When King Pukkusāti read the inscriptions on the plate, he was filled with boundless joy and decided to renounce the world. He cut off his hair, donned the yellow

¹For the introductory story see the commentary to the Majjhima Nikāya (Papañcasūdanī, II, 979f.). Details are given in the *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names* under "Pukkusāti." For the encounter with the Buddha see *The Middle Length Sayings*, III, 285-294.

robes of an ascetic, and left the palace. Then he travelled a long distance to Sāvatti, passing the gates of Jetavana, for he understood from his friend's letter that the Buddha was at Rājagaha. He therefore travelled on to Rājagaha without inquiring at Jetavana.

Pukkusāti, who had not received full ordination as a bhikkhu, spent one night in a potter's shed. The Buddha was on a tour and asked for permission to stay in the same shed. Permission was given. The Buddha saw that the young man was of pleasing deportment and asked him why he had gone forth and who his teacher was. Pukkusāti said he'd given up lay life because of the Buddha Gotama. The Buddha asked Pukkusāti if he had ever met the Buddha Gotama and Pukkusāti said no. Then the Buddha asked him if he'd recognize the Buddha if he saw him. Pukkusāti answered no. The Buddha thought to himself, "This young man of respectable family has gone forth on account of me. Suppose I were to teach him the Dhamma?" So he said to him, "I'll teach you the Dhamma, bhikkhu. Listen carefully, pay attention and I will speak." And Pukkusāti answered, "Yes, friend."

The Buddha gave Pukkusāti a detailed sermon, and at the end of the sermon, Pukkusāti realized that he was listening to the Buddha in person. He paid respects and asked that the Buddha acknowledge his mistake in addressing the Buddha by the term "friend," which implied they were on equal footing. Pukkusāti would refrain from repeating his error. The Buddha acknowledged the mistake.

Pukkusāti then asked to receive ordination in the Buddha's presence. If he had perfected himself in the past, the Buddha could have ordained him into the order merely by saying, "Come, bhikkhu." But Pukkusāti did not have a complete set of robes and a bowl, so the Buddha told him to find these first. While he was looking for these, Pukkusāti was killed by

a cow. Several bhikkhus asked the Buddha what had been his fate after his death, and the Buddha said that since he had reached the third stage of Awakening (Anāgāmi), Pukkusāti was in one of the higher realms and would attain complete Awakening without ever returning from that world.

You'll notice that Pukkusāti didn't need to know who was speaking to him. He listened to the Truth, the Dhamma, with an open mind, with the proper attention, and he was able to see the Truth for himself. So this should be the attitude of our students. There's no room in our work for blind faith. When we speak of having faith, it's in the sense of having confidence, and our confidence will be based on our own experiences. At the beginning we need enough confidence to give the technique a fair trial. And very soon we'll know for ourselves whether the teachings are true, beneficial, and for good and gain or not.

We're used to putting labels on things, which makes it difficult to consider them properly. This is especially so when it comes to religions. But all religions acknowledge the need for morality, and even those who live according to a personal philosophy rather than a religious training see the need for morality. Religions also see the need for the development of concentration, for a mind brought to a state of one-pointedness and equanimity. As Sayagyi said in *What Buddhism Is*:

It is here that the mind becomes freed from hindrances, pure and tranquil, illumined from without and within. The mind, in such a state, becomes powerful and bright. ... This light which is reflected before the mind's eye in complete darkness is a manifestation of the purity, tranquillity, and serenity of the mind. The Hindus work for it. To go from light into the void and to come back to it is truly Brahmanic. The New Testament, in the Book of Matthew, speaks of the "body full

of light.” We hear also of Roman Catholic priests meditating regularly for this very miraculous light. The Koran too gives prominence to the “Manifestation of Divine Light.” This mental reflex of light denotes the purity of mind within, and the purity of mind forms the essence of religious life, whether one is a Buddhist, Hindu, Christian or Muslim. Indeed, “Purity of mind” is the greatest common denominator of all religions. Love, which alone is a means for the unity of mankind, must be supreme, and it cannot be so unless the mind is transcendently pure.

Tranquillity and Insight

So once we have taken the first step through making the resolve to practise morality, our work has two aspects: meditation on tranquillity and meditation on insight or wisdom. These are the two branches of mental development. The benefit we can gain from these two meditations is great. Through concentration and tranquillity, we develop our minds; and once our minds are developed, we abandon all craving. Through insight meditation, we develop wisdom and with wisdom developed, we abandon all ignorance.

Tranquillity (*samatha*) is an unperturbed, peaceful, and lucid state of mind attained by strong mental concentration. That’s what we are working for these first five days. A high degree of tranquil concentration is indispensable for developing insight. It’s possible to use it to reach the *jhāna* states, or states of absorption, but this is not necessary. We can develop insight once we have a reasonably tranquil, well-concentrated mind. This tranquillity frees the mind from impurities and inner obstacles and gives the mind greater penetrative strength. Tranquillity has the power of making our mind reach one-pointedness and achieve non-distraction as we are free from

desire and ill will. It leads us to the perception of light, to the defining of phenomena, to knowledge and gladness, and it prepares us for higher levels of meditation.

Insight (*Vipassanā*) is the penetrative understanding by direct meditative experience of the impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and impersonality (*anattā*) of all material and mental phenomena of existence. It is insight that leads to the entrance into the supramundane states of Awakening and to final liberation. But we'll go into more detail concerning insight (*Vipassanā*) later on in our Dhamma talks. For the moment, our main task is to develop our concentration.

To illustrate the proper attitude towards the teachings and the teacher, I gave you a brief account of Pukkusāti; and we saw that after listening to a detailed sermon given by the Buddha, he was established in the third stage of fruition. It won't be easy for a person to get the fruition states unless all the necessary preparations have been made in the past to be ready for Awakening.

The Seven Bhikkhus' Supreme Effort

Sayagyi U Ba Khin was fond of telling stories of meditators who couldn't reach the desired goal on account of their eagerness and desperate efforts, thereby missing the essence of the true Dhamma. Another story about Pukkusāti in a previous life illustrates this point.¹ During the dispensation of the Buddha Kassapa, when the Buddha's Teachings were on the decline, Pukkusāti was one of seven bhikkhus who made a vow to meditate until they attained Arahatsip, or die in the attempt. Accordingly, they climbed a very high mountain that was so steep they had to use ladders near the top. When they

¹See *Buddhist Legends*, II 222f.

reached the top, they threw the ladders down so that there could be no retreat. Their leader became an Arahāt, and the second an Anāgāmi—passing into the Suddhāvasa Brahmā world. The others were reborn during this Buddha era as Pukkusāti, Bāhiya-Dārucīriya, Kumāra-Kassapa, Dabba-Mallaputta, and Sabhiya. In his former life, Pukkusāti died of hunger on the seventh day and thus the Buddha taught him the Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta,¹ which deals with the six elements of earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness. The Teacher knew where Pukkusāti was stuck, and so just the right kind of medicine was prescribed for the particular illness. The same was true for Bāhiya-Dārucīriya. In both cases their technique of meditation was correct, but there was something missing, and they couldn't untangle themselves. The Buddha knew this when he met Pukkusāti and Dārucīriya and gave the teaching best suited to them. You see, Buddhas have the ability to know every past existence of a person. They also know every thought occurring in a person and the causes underlying the effects in a person.

In my later talks, I shall be dealing in more detail with Dārucīriya, Kumāra-Kassapa, Dabba-Mallaputta, and Sabhiya. Out of these five, only Pukkusāti and Dārucīriya could not become bhikkhus because they hadn't worked in their past lives to become bhikkhus in the Saṅgha. It is said that Bāhiya-Dārucīriya either did not help fellow bhikkhus with bowls or robes when he was in the Saṅgha at the time of Buddha Kassapa or that he had shot a Pacceka Buddha with an arrow because he was greedy for that non-teaching Buddha's bowl

¹Majjhima Nikāya, Sutta 140. This sutta is the counterpart in the discourses (Sutta Piṭaka) of the Vibhaṅga in the Abhidhamma which shows how general statements of truth can be analysed in terms of ultimate truth.

and robes.¹ If one has given robes and other requisites to the bhikkhus and is well-perfected, the Buddha will admit him into the Community of Bhikkhus by merely uttering “Ehi, bhikkhu” (“Come, bhikkhu”) and that will constitute one’s admission. With this in mind, in Buddhist countries, such as Myanmar and Thailand, the lay disciples are ordained themselves and also help those near and dear to them to be ordained—once as a novice when they’re a teenager and a second time when they have reached the age of twenty as fully ordained bhikkhus. In addition, people offer robes and the other items of the eight requisites to the bhikkhus.

¹See the *Udāna Commentary* 140f.

DAY ONE: EVENING DISCOURSE

Sabba-pāpassa akaraṇaṃ kusalassa upasampadā
Sacitta-pariyodapanam etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanaṃ.

To abstain from evil, to do good,

To purify the mind.

These are the Teachings of all the Buddhas.

Dhammapada v. 183

Morality, Concentration, and Insight

This verse from the Dhammapada gives the essence of the Teachings of the Buddha very concisely. We can expand this brief statement to include the Path to Awakening, the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path is divided into three parts: Morality (*sīla*), Concentration or One-pointedness of Mind (*samādhi*), and Wisdom or Insight (*paññā*).

“To abstain from evil” is to refrain from doing evil deeds. This is morality, observing the precepts, *sīla*.

“To do good” means to bring about what is good, to cultivate good, and to keep oneself filled with good. To do that we must keep our minds free from evil. The mind is free of evil when it is concentrated, when one-pointedness of mind (*samādhi*) is achieved. When the mind is fully concentrated, it’s in a state of purity; and at such times we’re beyond the sensual planes (the *kāma* planes); and we’re free from unwholesome or negative forces (*akusala* forces). This is a jhānic state of mind, a state of absorption.

“To purify the mind” is to practise so that one gains Right Knowledge, Right Understanding or Right View. This is

Wisdom or Insight (*paññā*). We've come here to undergo the training based on moral living (*sīla*) leading to concentration (*samādhi*) leading to wisdom (*paññā*). We'll undergo this training for ten days, long enough for us to see results. This training is also known as the Training in Higher Morality, the Training in Higher Mental [Development], and the Training in Higher Wisdom (*adhisīla-sikkhā*, *adhicitta-sikkhā*, *adhipaññā-sikkhā*).

In other words, we're going to practise the Noble Eightfold Path, the Path that was laid down by the Buddha Gotama over 2500 years ago in his First Sermon, named in Pāli the Dhamma-cakka-pavattana-sutta: The Setting in Motion of the Wheel of the Doctrine. He taught this to the five ascetics who had accompanied him during the six years he struggled to attain Awakening. This Eightfold Path is the means to the end, the end of suffering. The essence of the Eightfold Path is summed up in the three steps of Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom. This is the path the student should follow strictly and diligently.

At one time, the Buddha came back from a journey through the country accompanied by five hundred bhikkhus.¹ These bhikkhus were seated in the hall at Sāvatti discussing the paths they had walked along. "The path to such and such a village is smooth," they said. "The path to such and such a village is rough." They talked of paths covered with pebbles or without pebbles. The Buddha, realizing the bhikkhus were ready to attain full Awakening, that is to say Arahantship, went to the hall and took his seat. He asked the bhikkhus what they had been talking about, and they told him. "Bhikkhus," he said, "this is a path foreign to our interests. A bhikkhu should walk on the Noble Path, for that is the only way for him to

¹For the story see *Buddhist Legends*, III 149.

obtain release from all suffering.” And he spoke the following stanzas:

The Eightfold Path is the best of Paths. The Four Noble Truths are the best of truths. Freedom from desire is the best of states. He that has eyes to see is the best of men.

This is the only Path. No other Path leads to Purity of Vision. Walk on this Path. In this way you will confound Māra, the hindrance to Liberation.

Enter this Path and you will make an end of suffering. This is the Path I preached as soon as I had learned how to remove the arrow of craving.

You yourself must put forth effort. The Perfect Ones (the Tathāgatas) are only guides. By meditation, those who walk this Path win release from the bondage of Māra.

Dhammapada vv. 273-276

At the end of the stanzas, the five hundred bhikkhus attained Arahantship. This is not because it is easy to attain Awakening, but because they had worked sufficiently before and only needed a little extra encouragement to reach the goal.

The Noble Eightfold Path¹

Now what is the Noble Eightfold Path? The first three steps are Moral Actions (*sīla*):

1. *Sammā-vācā*: Right Speech
2. *Sammā-kammanta*: Right Action

¹For more details see Ledi Sayadaw, *The Noble Eightfold Path (The Wheel)*, nos. 245–247.

3. *Sammā-ājiva*: Right Livelihood

Then comes Concentration, Equanimity of Mind (*samādhi*), the next three steps:

4. *Sammā-vāyāma*: Right Exertion or Right Effort
5. *Sammā-sati*: Right Attentiveness or Right Mindfulness
6. *Sammā-samādhi*: Right Concentration or Right Collectedness

The last two steps comprise Wisdom or Insight (*paññā*):

7. *Sammā-saṅkappa*: Right Contemplation or Right Thought
8. *Sammā-ditṭhi*: Right Understanding or Right View

Now let's examine the steps of the Path in more detail. With morality we have Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood.

Right Speech means speech that is truthful, beneficial, and neither foul nor malicious. It can be divided into four parts:

1. Refraining from telling lies.
2. Refraining from back-biting and slander or false accusation.
3. Refraining from using abusive language, harsh words, speech which is harmful to others.
4. Refraining from frivolous talk, such as telling legends, and fables, talk which is useless.

During our ten days of meditation, Noble Silence will assure us of Right Speech. You'll notice that in defining Right Speech, we have given the types of speech to be avoided. If we avoid wrong speech, what is left is Right Speech. If we keep Noble Silence, we don't have to worry about whether our speech is right or not.

For Right Action, we also have a definition which gives us the types of action to avoid: we refrain from killing, from taking what is not given, and from sexual misconduct.

Let's look at refraining from killing in a little more detail to help us understand better what's involved.¹ What constitutes killing a sentient being? First of all it must *be* a sentient being. You must *know* it is a sentient being and you must *intend* to kill it. Then you must *make an effort* to kill it. That includes taking action yourself or encouraging someone else to do so. And finally the being *must be killed*. So we can see how important the mental factor is. If we accidentally step on an insect in the garden, we needn't feel guilty about that. But any conscious killing, ranging from killing the eggs of lice or bugs or causing abortion to the slaughter of any living creature, including human beings—that is wrong action.

Refraining from taking what is not given means abstaining from taking, with the intention to steal, animate or inanimate property that belongs to someone—removing or appropriating such property without the owner's consent, either by our own physical effort or by inciting someone else to do so.

Refraining from sexual misconduct means any sexual act which would cause pain and suffering to others. Adultery, for example, causes the disruption of marriages. Also included are rape, improper sexual relations of a man with a girl under the guardianship of her father, mother, or someone else taking responsibility for her. It's also wrong to have improper relations with a minor or with any other person unless you're legally married to that person. This restraint also includes

¹See Sayagyi U Tint Yee, "What Have You Gained by Your Meditation?" (*The Anecdotes of Sayagyi U Ba Khin*, p. 48) and Ledi Sayadaw "The Manual of the Constituents of the Noble Path (*Maggāṅga-dīpaṇi*)," *The Manuals of Buddhism*, p. 244 ("Five conditions of Pāṇātipāṭa").

other sensual pleasures and means we should abstain from intoxicants, gambling with cards, dice, and so forth.

The third part of moral action is Right Livelihood. Right Livelihood means living by trades that don't increase the suffering of other beings. This means we avoid trading in slaves, manufacturing weapons and trading in intoxicants or drugs. There are four types of wrong livelihood: (1) one that is based on wrong conduct, (2) one that is based on improper means or methods, (3) one based on the deception of others, and (4) one based on a low, unworthy art or practice.

Wrong conduct includes the types of wrong actions and wrong speech we've already mentioned. We should refrain from killing sentient beings, etc. We should refrain from making our living through lying and the other forms of wrong speech. There are five kinds of merchandise which should not be sold: weapons, living beings, meat, intoxicants, and poisons. If we refrain from these kinds of wrong livelihood, then Right Livelihood is practised.

The wrong livelihood described as "improper means" refers to the sort of wrong livelihood which should not be practised by Buddhist bhikkhus or by lay hermits, such as *Isis* or *Rishis*, who are a class of lay disciples in Myanmar and India. They shouldn't make their living by acquiring gifts and offerings improperly. For example, they shouldn't give fruits or flowers, etc., to families in hopes of receiving something better in return. And they shouldn't give medical preparations or flatter people or act as their messenger.

Five improper practices are mentioned: (1) trickery and deception by working wonders, giving people the impression that one possesses extraordinary qualities such as great virtue when in actual fact one does not. (2) Then there is improper talk designed to please donors so they will give a gift. (3) One shouldn't make gestures or give hints inviting offerings.

(4) One shouldn't make threats in order to oblige people to make offerings. (5) And one shouldn't give a small gift in order to get a bigger gift in return.

Low, unworthy arts or practices apply especially to bhikkhus, but can be applied to householders as well. This includes such worldly arts as prophesying by palmistry and interpreting other marks on the body, astrology, and other such low arts which are contrary to the bhikkhu's practice of the Dhamma.

The Buddha gave rules for the bhikkhus and lay people to guide them in keeping *sīla*. For the bhikkhus there are 227 rules. But we are not bhikkhus here and do not need to know them for our work. As laymen, we should keep either the five precepts or the eight rules of conduct. For new students the five precepts will be enough. Old students should keep the additional three precepts.

Let us look at the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*):

1. *Pāṇātipātā*: Abstaining from killing sentient beings.
This we have already explained. Life is the most precious possession of any living being. This serves to develop compassion.
2. *Adinnādānā*: Abstaining from taking what is not given. This serves as a check against improper desires for possessions.
3. *Kāmesu micchācārā*: abstaining from sexual misconduct. Sexual desire is dormant in everyone. It's irresistible to almost everyone. Improper sexual expression is therefore prohibited.
4. *Musāvādā*: Abstaining from telling lies. This precept is included to fulfil by way of speech the essence of truth.

5. *Surā-meraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā*: Abstaining from intoxicants. If we're intoxicated, we lose our ability to keep our minds steady, our ability to reason. These are essential if we are to realize the truth.

These are the precepts we've all undertaken to keep. We're not likely to kill each other. But we must also remember not to swat a mosquito if it bothers us. Our needs are not very great. Our food is provided. So it should be easy to refrain from taking what is not ours. For these ten days, we'll refrain from any sexual expression whatever, so we don't need to worry about that. With Noble Silence we know that our speech isn't wrong. And we should refrain from taking any drugs or drinks that could cloud the mind. On the other hand, there may be medicines which are necessary for our life and safety.

For the old students there are three more precepts to be followed:

6. *Vikāla-bhojanā*: Abstaining from taking food at an unseasonable time.
7. *Nacca-gīta-vādita-visūkadassana mālā-gandha-vile-pana-dhāraṇa-maṇḍana-vibhūsanaṭṭhānā*: Abstaining from dancing, singing, music, and unseemly shows, from the use of garlands, perfumes, unguents, and from things that tend to beautify and adorn us.
8. *Uccāsayana-mahāsayanā*: Abstaining from using high and luxurious seats. These might be conducive to laziness and to making us feel proud.

Abstaining from taking food at an unseasonable time means not eating after noon. These eight precepts are those kept by Buddhists four times during the lunar month, days

corresponding to the four phases of the moon. These are called Uposatha days, Observance Days or Fasting Days, in the sense that no solid food is taken after noon.

During the time of the Buddha there were five hundred lay disciples who didn't keep even the first five precepts.¹ They thought it was enough to make an effort to keep only one precept. So some abstained from killing, others from telling lies, and so forth. One day they started arguing about which precept was the most difficult. "It's very difficult. The precept I'm keeping is very hard to respect." Finally they went to the Buddha to have him tell them which was the most difficult precept. But the Buddha didn't single out any one of the precepts. "All the precepts are hard to keep," he told the laymen. And he gave them the following stanzas:

<i>Yo pāṇam atipāteti</i>	<i>musāvādaṇ ca bhāsati</i>
<i>Loke adinnam ādiyati</i>	<i>paradāraṇ ca gacchati</i>
<i>Surāmerayapāṇaṇ ca</i>	<i>yo naro anuyuñjati</i>
<i>Idh'evam eso lokasmiṃ</i>	<i>mūlaṃ khaṇati attano.</i>
<i>Evaṃ bho purisa jānāhi</i>	<i>pāpadhammā asaṇṇatā</i>
<i>Mā taṃ lobho adhammo ca</i>	<i>ciraṃ dukkhāya randhayuṃ.</i>

Whoever in this world destroys life, tells lies, takes what is not given, goes to other men's wives, and is addicted to intoxicating drinks, he digs up his roots in this world. Know this, good man: It is not easy to restrain yourself from evil. Do not let greed and unrighteousness oppress you with protracted suffering.

Dhammapada vv. 246–248

So we must strive to keep all the precepts. If we break any of them, that will cause us suffering later on.

¹For the story, see *Buddhist Legends*, III 125

The Story of Mahādhana

It's difficult for us to appreciate how fortunate we are to be human beings with an opportunity to practise meditation and through it to bring an end to all the suffering we experience. In *The Real Values of True Buddhist Meditation*, Sayagyi U Ba Khin explains how long we must work to reach Awakening. To become an Arahāt, we must work approximately one hundred to one thousand world cycles. We can work for that long, but if we miss the chance to work for liberation, when the opportunity comes, all that work can go to waste. This was the case of Mahādhana, the son of a treasurer during the time of the Buddha.¹ Mahādhana was born in a very rich family in Benares. His parents decided that since they were wealthy, their son could enjoy himself as he wished, and the only studies he did consisted in learning to play musical instruments. He married a girl from a family equally wealthy. His wife had learned to sing and dance, but no more.

A group of young men in the city decided to corrupt Mahādhana. They seated themselves in a spot where he was sure to see them on his way to the palace and started drinking strong drink and having a feast. Mahādhana asked his servant what they were drinking. Was it good? "Master," his servant answered, "there's no drink in this world that compares to this drink." So he had a little brought in order to try it. And then he asked for more, and soon it became a habit with him. The young men flocked around him and helped him spend all his wealth on food, drink, flowers, and perfumes. When his money was gone he spent all his wife's money. He sold all his property and wound up a pauper. Finally, he and his wife

¹See *Buddhist Legends*, II 346–348.

were reduced to eating food left over from other people's kitchens.

One day, the Buddha saw them and smiled. Now when a Buddha smiles, there's always a reason, and his attendant Ānanda asked him why he had smiled. "Just look at Mahādhana," he replied. "He has squandered two fortunes and now he and his wife are begging alms. If he hadn't squandered his wealth, but had applied himself to business while he was in the prime of life, he would have become the chief treasurer. If he had become a bhikkhu, he would have attained full Awakening, Arahatship, and his wife would have reached the third stage of Awakening. If he had applied himself in business when he was middle-aged, he would have become second treasurer, or if he had become a bhikkhu, he would have attained the fruit of the third stage of Awakening—he would have become an Anāgāmī—and his wife would have become established in the second stage of Awakening, she would have become a Sakadāgāmī. If he had applied himself in business late in life, he would have become third treasurer, or, if he had become a bhikkhu, he would have attained the fruit of the second path and his wife would have been established in the first stage of Awakening, she would have become a Sotāpanna." And the Buddha pronounced the following stanzas:

*Acaritvā brahmacariyaṃ aladdhā yobbane dhanam
 Jīṇṇakoñcā va jhāyanti khīṇamacche va pallale.
 Acaritvā brahmacariyaṃ aladdhā yobbane dhanam
 Senti cāpātikhīṇā va purāṇāni anutthunam.*

Those who do not lead the Holy Life, those who do not obtain wealth in their youth, perish like decrepit herons in a pond where the fish have died out.

Those who do not lead the Holy Life, those who do not obtain wealth in their youth, lie about like worn-out bows, and they bewail by-gone days.

Dhammapada vv. 155–156

We can see from the comments the Buddha made concerning Mahādhana that he and his wife had done all that was necessary to reach Awakening. But they missed their opportunity because of their immoral conduct. In the case of the wife we can deduce that because of some past deed she was bound with such a careless husband. So we shouldn't miss our chance, and we shouldn't lose any time in working. The sooner we begin, the better we work, the better the results will be.

The Buddha told the disciples of Pāṭaligāma that there are five dangers awaiting those who break the precepts and five blessings that come to those who keep the precepts.¹ The five perils that await the man who is unvirtuous are: loss of wealth through his heedlessness, bad reputation, feeling timid and troubled when he enters an assembly of people—whether they be nobles, priests, householders or ascetics—and he dies with his mind bewildered; when the body breaks up after death, he's reborn in a realm of misery, an unhappy state, in a lower world, in hell.

The five blessings that come to a virtuous man are great increase of wealth through his diligence, a good reputation, he feels confident when he enters an assembly of people, he has a serene death, and after death, when the body breaks up, he's reborn in a happy realm, in a heavenly world.

¹See *Dialogues of the Buddha*, II 89–91. Also translated in *The Life of the Buddha* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1978).

Most important for us here is that virtuous living makes it possible for us to develop Right Concentration. If we're free from worrying about bad actions, if we haven't been indulging in distracting activities, then our minds can calm down, we can achieve a tranquil mind.

Samādhi

The Buddha pointed out that those who are fully Awakened, the Arahats, observe the eight precepts throughout their entire life. We who aspire to Awakening should follow the example of the Arahats.¹

So we come to the second part of the Noble Eightfold Path: *samādhi*. This includes Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

We must make the right kind of effort, the right kind of exertion, if we are to attain Right Attentiveness. Unless we make a determined effort to narrow down the range of thoughts of our wavering, unsteady minds, we can't expect to acquire the attentiveness of mind that helps us to bring the mind, by means of Right Concentration, to a state of One-pointedness and Equanimity. When the mind's in a state of One-pointedness, it will be freed from the hindrances; it will be pure and tranquil, illumined within and without. The mind in such a state becomes powerful and bright. Outside it's represented by a light that is just a mental reflection. The light varies in degrees from that of a star to that of a sun. This light, which is reflected before the mind's eye in complete darkness, is a manifestation of the purity, tranquillity and serenity of the mind.

¹See the Buddha's discourse to the laywoman Visākhā on observing special days (Upasatha), *The Gradual Sayings*, I 190–192.

The students in these courses are helped to develop the power of concentration to one-pointedness by encouraging them to focus their attention on a spot on the upper lip at the base of the nose, synchronizing the inward and outward motion of respiration with the silent awareness of the in-breath and out-breath. Whether we believe that life is the result of past actions, the result of mental forces (*sāṅkhāras*), or whether we believe life to be a gift from some god, the symbol of life is the same: it's the rhythm, pulsation or vibration latent in man. The respiration is, in fact, a reflection of this symbol of life. In Ānāpāna meditation, which we're practising now, the great advantage of the technique is that breathing is not only a natural function of the body, it's also available at all times. Through the observation of our breathing, we can anchor our attention at any time on the breath, to the exclusion of all other thoughts.

With determined effort, we narrow down the range of our thoughts. At first, we fix our mind on the area around the nose, mindful of each breath. Gradually the breaths become shorter and shorter, and our attention is limited to a spot on the upper lip. We feel the warm air as we breathe out and the cool air as we breathe in. There's no reason why a student of meditation should not be able to secure one-pointedness of mind with a few days' training.

The early commentators on the Pāḷi texts interpreted the words for breathing in and breathing out differently. The commentators on the collection of texts concerning the rules of discipline for the Saṅgha (the Vinaya-piṭaka) give breathing out as coming before breathing in.¹ The commentators on the collection of texts containing discourses (the Sutta-piṭaka)

¹The Vinaya interpretation gives "breathing in" as *ānam* or *assāso*, "breathing out" as *apānam* or *passāso*.

interpret the same Pāḷi words the other way round.¹ According to the commentators, the reason given for considering the out-breath to be first is that a newborn baby first expels the air in its lungs before breathing in. But we do not need to concern ourselves with this. We should begin to watch the breath again and again, as soon as we remember to do so.

Paññā

The last division of the Noble Eightfold Path is Wisdom (*paññā*). Wisdom or knowledge can be acquired in three ways:

- (1) By listening to others or through reading,
- (2) By thinking and analyzing,
- (3) By personal experience.

It's only when our knowledge comes through personal experience that we can truly, permanently abide in the Teachings. But we'll go into more detail concerning wisdom when we come to the second stage of our meditation practice.

Practising Ānāpāna

Our task these first few days is to practise Ānāpāna. There are three things to know as continuously as possible: (1) the breath entering the nostrils, (2) the breath going out of the nostrils, (3) and the spot at the base of the nose on the upper lip. This spot is the focusing point, the point of reference. You must be aware that you're breathing in as you breathe in. You

¹See *The Path of Purification*, Chap. VIII ¶164. Cf. Nāṇamoli, *Mindfulness of Breathing*, 4th ed., BPS, 1981, p. 21, n. 1 (quoting the commentary on the Visuddhimagga); *The Path of Discrimination* (Paṭisambhidāmagga), p. 205, n. 1 (quoting the commentary on the Paṭisambhidāmagga).

must be aware that you're breathing out as you breathe out. At times, in order to steady your mind, you may need to note mentally "in" as you breath in, "out" as you breathe out.

At times you may confuse them, and you will not note them correctly. When that happens you should start over. Breathe intentionally, consciously. Make a continuous, steadfast effort. It's not necessary to read about this or talk about it or think about it. The only thing to do is to do it. Reading or talking or thinking will just be time spent with your attention diverted, and that will be a hindrance to your *samādhi*. If you talk too much or think too much, you will find your conversations and thoughts coming back again when you try to meditate.

So, if you wish to make progress, just concentrate on the Development of the Mindfulness of Breathing (*ānāpāna-bhāvanā*). The course is only ten days, so during this period you should refrain from talking and thinking. Just keep on knowing the in-breath and the out-breath at the focal point at all times. The Buddha said, "It will be to your benefit if you could keep on knowing your respiration even when you are answering the call of nature." You may find it impossible to keep continuous awareness. Even so, you must try your utmost.

Venerable Webu Sayadaw was gracious enough to visit the International Meditation Centre in Yangon, Myanmar, many years ago when Sayagyi U Ba Khin was teaching there. Venerable Webu Sayadaw is believed to have reached the highest level of perfect peace and happiness. He asked us what we gained by sleeping. "Nothing," was our reply. "Then why do you sleep?" he asked. What he meant was that the time spent on sleep could be more profitably utilized if used for meditation. Webu Sayadaw told us that we have slept for too long and should minimize the time spent on it. There are

many meditation centres in Myanmar where the bhikkhus teach people to meditate until midnight and to get up again at four o'clock the next morning. Our schedule here is much more relaxed, like the schedule at IMC-Yangon. You should be sure to follow the schedule.

Many years ago, two American ladies came to IMC-Yangon. When they arrived, Sayagyi told them about the meditation program and that they were to wake up at 4 A.M. each morning. One woman replied that she could not wake up before 8 A.M. Sayagyi told her to try to follow the schedule. She replied that she couldn't get up that early, and that she wasn't used to obeying orders, particularly from men.

Sayagyi told her that he was there to offer the fruits of the Dhamma to all who came and that she had come to the centre to receive what was being offered there. So it was up to her to take it or leave it. He explained also that the schedule was set up in order to give the students maximum benefits. By not following it, she would be the loser.

Then Sayagyi cited another example. There was an elderly American woman who, on the night of her arrival, had already spent twenty hours on an airplane. She was feeling pretty tired. In spite of that, she woke up at 4 A.M. the next morning and began her meditation. You may be in the same circumstances as this American woman, coming from far away countries.

You will notice that the person who had the right amount of *pāramīs*, or good deeds done in the past, needed no persuasion. The result of her following the timetable was that she made good progress in her meditation; by that I mean that she acquired peace and tranquillity to a fair extent.

The Dhamma eliminates suffering and offers peace and tranquillity. We've seen many cases where students have attained this to some extent by following the schedule and the

rules and regulations of the meditation camp. Of all the rules and regulations, the most important is to observe Noble Silence throughout the entire ten days. There should be no talking among the students. But if you need something, you can approach the manager or the teachers.

DAY TWO: MORNING DISCOURSE

The Discourse on the Setting in Motion of the Wheel of the Dhamma¹

At one time, the Blessed One was dwelling at Bārāṇasi, in the deer park at Isipatana. There, the Blessed One addressed the group of five bhikkhus [Koṇḍañña, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma, and Assaji, who had been with him when he had tried to attain Awakening through the austere practices]:

The Middle Way. “Bhikkhus, one who has gone forth should not resort to these two extremes. What are the two? There is this [extreme] which is connected with sensual desire: being attached to the sensual pleasures of a life of luxury, which is inferior, vulgar, associated with the ordinary man, ignoble, and associated with what is unprofitable. And there is this [other extreme] of being attached to exhausting oneself, which is misery (*dukkha*), ignoble, and associated with what is unprofitable.

“Now, bhikkhus, having given up both of these extremes, the Perfected One (Tathāgata) has become fully Awakened to a middle way that makes for vision, that makes for knowledge, that leads to perfect calmness, to supernormal mental powers, to perfect Awakening, to Nibbāna.

The Noble Eightfold Path. “And what is the middle way, bhikkhus, to which the Perfected One has become fully Awakened, [the way] that makes for vision, that makes for knowledge, that leads to perfect calmness, to supernormal

¹Vinaya-piṭaka (Mahāvagga Khandhaka) and Saṃyutta-nikāya, V 420ff. In preparing this translation, we have consulted *The Book of the Discipline*, IV 15–19; and *The Life of the Buddha*, 42–44.

mental powers, to perfect Awakening, to Nibbāna? It is just this, the Noble Eightfold Path; that is to say: (1) Right Thought, (2) Right View, (3) Right Speech, (4) Right Action, (5) Right Livelihood, (6) Right Effort, (7) Right Mindfulness, and (8) Right Concentration.

“It is this, bhikkhus, this middle way, that the Perfected One has been fully Awakened to, [the way] that makes for vision, that makes for knowledge, that leads to perfect calmness, to supernormal mental powers, to perfect Awakening, to Nibbāna.

The Four Noble Truths. “Now this, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of Suffering (*dukkha*): birth is suffering, old age is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, association with the unpleasant is suffering, separation from the pleasant is suffering, this longing for what one does not receive is suffering—to summarize: [material form, sensations, perceptions, conditioned mental states, and consciousness,] the five aggregates that sustain renewed existence are suffering.

“Now this, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering: It is this craving (*taṇhā*) that leads to rebirth, that is highly delighted by various sorts (of desire) which are accompanied by being delighted and by passion; that is to say, craving for sensual desire, craving for (an eternal) existence, craving for non-existence.

“Now this, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering: it is cessation, the total absence of craving, giving up, letting go, release, detachment.

“Now this, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering: it is this Noble Eightfold Path itself, that is to say, Right Thought, Right View, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration.

The Twelve Aspects of the Four Noble Truths. “ ‘This is the Noble Truth of Suffering,’—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

“ ‘And moreover, this Noble Truth of Suffering must be completely known’—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

“ ‘And moreover, this Noble Truth of Suffering has been completely known’—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

“ ‘This is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering’—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

“ ‘And moreover, this Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering must be completely known’—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

“ ‘And moreover, this Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering has been completely known’—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

“ ‘This is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering’—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

“‘And moreover, this Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering must be completely known’—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

“‘And moreover, this Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering has been completely known’—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

“‘This is the Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering’—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

“‘And moreover, this Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering must be completely known’—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

“‘And moreover, this Noble Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering has been completely known’—with this thought, bhikkhus, which had never been heard by me before concerning phenomena, vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, (higher) knowledge arose, light arose.

“Bhikkhus, as long as I had not become thoroughly purified in these twelve aspects of knowledge and seeing through correctly developing these three stages of the Four Noble Truths, I did not declare that I had become fully Awakened to that thorough (Self-) Awakening unsurpassed in the world of *devas* including the *Māras* and *brahmās*, in this generation of recluses and brahmans, and in (this world) of *devas* and men.

“But when, bhikkhus, I had become thoroughly purified in these twelve aspects of knowledge and seeing through correctly developing these three stages of the Four Noble Truths, I then declared that I had become fully Awakened to that thorough (Self-) Awakening, unsurpassed in the world of *devas*, including the *Māras* and *brahmās*, in this generation of recluses and brahmans, and in (this world) of *devas* and men.

“Then, there arose in me knowledge and sight. Release is unshakable for me. This is the last birth. Now there will be no rebirth.”

This is what the Blessed One said. Delighted, the group of five bhikkhus rejoiced at what the Blessed One said.

The Awakening of Koṇḍañña and the Rejoicing of the *Devas* and *Brahmās*. Furthermore, as this explanation was being spoken, there arose in the Venerable Koṇḍañña the stainless, spotless Vision of the Truth: “Whatever phenomena arise, all such phenomena cease.”

And when the Blessed One set rolling the Wheel of the Dhamma, the earth *devas* proclaimed the news: “The unsurpassed Wheel of the Dhamma set rolling by the Blessed One at Bārāṇasi in the deer park at Isipatana cannot be rolled back by a recluse, brahman, *deva*, *Māra*, *brahmā*, or by anyone in the world.”

Having heard the news of the earth *devas*, the *devas* of the Four Great Kings [who guard the four quarters] ... the *Tāvātimsa devas* ... the *Yāma devas* ... the *Tusita devas* ... the *Nimmanarati devas* ... the *Paranimmita-vasavatti devas* ... and the *Brahma-kāyika devas* proclaimed the news: “The unsurpassed Wheel of the Dhamma set rolling by the Blessed One at Bārāṇasi in the deer park at Isipatana cannot be rolled back by a recluse, Brahman, *deva*, *Māra*, *brahmā*, or by anyone in the world.”

Thus, in that moment, in that second, in that instant, the news reached as far as the *brahmā* world, and the ten thousand-fold world systems trembled, quaked, shook violently and a radiance, splendid, measureless, surpassing the glory of the *devas* appeared in the world.

Then the Blessed One spoke this solemn utterance, “Indeed, Koṇḍañña has understood. Indeed, Koṇḍañña has understood.” Thus it was that Aññāta-Koṇḍañña [Koṇḍañña who has understood] became the name of the Venerable Koṇḍañña.

Aññāta-Koṇḍañña’s Ordination. Then the Venerable Aññāta-Koṇḍañña, having seen the Dhamma, attained the Dhamma, known the Dhamma, plunged into Dhamma, having crossed over doubt, having put away uncertainty, having attained without another’s help to full confidence in the Teacher’s instruction, spoke thus to the Blessed One, “Sir, may I receive the going forth from the Blessed One, may I receive (full) ordination?”

“Come, bhikkhu,” the Blessed One said, “the Dhamma has been well taught. Practise the holy life rightly in order to make an end to suffering.” And this was this venerable one’s ordination.

[Then the Buddha taught the other four bhikkhus, and Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma, and Assaji attained Awakening and received the going forth and full ordination from the Buddha.]

The Background to the Teaching of the First Sermon¹

Yesterday we mentioned that after becoming Awakened, the Buddha hesitated to teach. He knew that the Dhamma is profound, hard to see, hard to realize. It’s the most peaceful

¹See *The Life of the Buddha*, pp. 37–39.

goal, superior to all other goals. It cannot be attained by mere reason. And the Buddha saw that the people in the world were bound by attachments. It would be difficult for them to see the truth and reach Nibbāna. “And if I taught the Dhamma,” he thought, “others wouldn’t understand me, and that would be wearying and troublesome for me.”

At that time, the *brahmā* Sahampati read the thoughts of the Buddha. He had been associated with him in his past lives. He realized that if the Buddha decided not to teach, the world would be lost. So he went to the Buddha and after paying respects, he said, “Lord, let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma. ... There are creatures with only a little dust on their eyes who are wasting away through not hearing the Doctrine. Some of them will gain full Awakening.”

The Buddha listened to *brahmā* Sahampati’s plea. Out of compassion for creatures, he surveyed the world with the eye of One Who is Awakened. Just as in a pond of blue, red or white lotuses, some lotuses that are germinated and grow in the water thrive immersed in the water without coming up out of it, some other lotuses that are germinated and grow in the water rest on the water’s surface, and some other lotuses that are germinated and grow in the water come right up out of the water and stand clear, unwetted by it, so too, he saw creatures with little dust on their eyes and with much dust on their eyes, with keen faculties and with dull faculties, with good qualities and with bad qualities, easy to teach and hard to teach. When he had seen all this, he spoke to the *brahmā* Sahampati:

Wide open are the portals of the Deathless. Let those who hear show faith. If I was inclined not to teach the sublime Doctrine that I know, it was because I saw it would be vexing to teach it.

Next the Buddha considered whom he should teach first. The two teachers, Ālāra and Uddaka, with whom he had worked before, had both died and could not be taught. Then it occurred to him, “The five ascetics who attended me while I was engaged in my struggle were very helpful. Suppose I taught the Doctrine to them first?”

So the Buddha went to the five ascetics and taught them the First Sermon with which we began. As we saw, this sermon describes the Middle Way which leads to Nibbāna. This Middle Way avoids extremes. So we see that we must work in a balanced way. If we are too caught up in seeking sensual pleasures, we will never be able to concentrate properly. Nor should we be too severe. If we force too much, that too will become a distraction.

The Buddha went on to describe the Noble Eightfold Path which we discussed yesterday. But the Eightfold Path is incomplete in itself, so the Buddha next gave the Four Noble Truths. And he emphasized how thoroughly he had to understand the Four Noble Truths before he reached full Awakening without anyone to teach him.

Koṇḍañña was the first to understand for himself the Teachings of the Buddha. He was the first to become ordained as a bhikkhu with the words “Ehi bhikkhu”—“Come, bhikkhu.” For the other four ascetics, more instruction was needed, so the Buddha taught them during the next four days. They too attained Awakening and were ordained.

On the fifth day, the Buddha gave the second discourse, the Discourse on the Characteristic of No Self (*Anattā-lakkhaṇa Sutta*). At the end of this discourse, all five bhikkhus attained full Awakening, Arahatsip.

The Story of Sātāgira, Hemavata, and Kālī¹

When the Buddha preached the first sermon, many beings in other planes were listening too, including five hundred earthbound *yakkhas*, with their leader Sātāgira. Yakkhas are a kind of ogre. Now Sātāgira could not give his full attention to the discourse because he was thinking of his friend, another *yakkha* named Hemavata. They had agreed that if anything unusual should happen they'd tell each other. As Sātāgira listened, he thought to himself that Gotama must be a true Buddha. His teaching was good and it was effective. He wanted to invite his friend to hear the sermon of the Buddha giving the Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths.

Now when the Buddha gave the first sermon, thirty-two marvels were manifested, even in the Himalayas where Sātāgira's friend Hemavata resided with five hundred followers. Fruit trees bore fruit out of season. Flowers appeared on the trees out of season, and so forth. Hemavata wanted to invite his friend to see these marvels.

As *yakkhas*, Sātāgira and Hemavata could go through the air. So, coming towards each other from opposite directions, they met above Rājagaha. Just as they met, a woman named Kālī came up to the veranda on top of her palace. The weather was warm and the house was stuffy. She was in an advanced stage of pregnancy and having difficulty, so she went up to enjoy the cool, fresh air. And she heard the two *yakkhas* discussing the Buddha's teaching. Hemavata was asking his friend, "What are the qualities of the Buddha? Is Gotama a real Buddha? Does he practise what he preaches?" And he asked many similar questions regarding the Dhamma and the Noble Eightfold Path.

¹See *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, II 1091ff.

Sayagyi U Ba Khin told this story in a radio talk he gave in 1950, and at this point he said, "On hearing this discussion Kālī was 'short-circuited,' and she was established in the first stage of Awakening."

Sayagyi pointed out that if we read between the lines in this story, we will see that even though Kālī lived far from Bārāṇasi, she was established in the first fruition state by merely hearing the Dhamma through a conversation between two *yakkhas*. She was foremost among all the disciples to get the fruition state through the hearing of the Dhamma from someone else rather than directly from the Buddha.

The story of the two *yakkhas* is also instructive. In a former life, they had been bhikkhus who were very proficient in the rules for bhikkhus, and they gave decisions concerning the meaning of the rules when there was a disagreement. One day, two bhikkhus had a disagreement. One of them left their monastery and went to stay with two learned bhikkhus during the rainy season. Even though his offence was minor and he was in the wrong, he wanted to win the two learned elders over to his side.

He stayed with them and was a very obedient servant during the rainy season. When it was over he went to take leave of the two elders. He paid his respects and made a request, "If a bhikkhu comes and asks for a judgement concerning such and such a rule, please keep silent and say nothing." They showed their consent by remaining silent. The bhikkhu went back to his own monastery and quarrelled with the other bhikkhu concerning his offence. Then the other bhikkhu went to the two elders for a judgement. The elders were silent, and he was defeated. The bhikkhu returned saying, "The Buddha's Dispensation (Sāsana) has been ruined by these two elders." Now this was a grave offence on the part of

the two elders, so after they died, because of this, they became *yakkhas*.

Here, Sayagyi gave a word of caution, “Not only did these two elders become *yakkhas*, but also their followers became *yakkhas*—five hundred for each elder. Be careful,” Sayagyi warned, “for if your teacher goes wrong, you will also go wrong. The pupil follows in the teacher’s footsteps.”

In our work here, we are following the Teachings of the Buddha given in the First Sermon. We are working to realize the Four Noble Truths by following the Noble Eightfold Path. We develop in morality through keeping the precepts. With *Ānāpāna* meditation, we are developing concentration during these first few days. And soon we will work for insight through *Vipassanā* meditation.

Controlling the Mind

You have probably found that it is very difficult to control the mind. Sayagyi U Ba Khin, in one of his discourses, gave these instructions:

“You’ve probably seen cowboys in the movies trying to tame wild horses. The horses are always kicking and jumping and struggling, never staying still for very long. Well, the mind is like those wild horses, never staying still for very long on any particular object. In addition it never dwells within the body for long. This is because ever since birth our minds have always dwelt on external objects perceived through the senses, such as sights, sounds, scents, tastes, touch sensations, and thoughts.

“In *Ānāpāna* meditation we work to note, to know, to be aware of, to observe each and every in-coming and out-going breath. The purpose of this is to provide a means whereby the restless fluttering mind can be drawn back to a particular object or base, thus bringing the mind under control. Just as an

untamed calf must be tied to a stake to prevent it from wandering away, so too must the mind be tied down to the ‘stake’ (the base of the nose) by the ‘rope’ (the knowing of each in-coming and out-going breath) to make it calm and steady. When such a state has been attained to a certain extent, then one has achieved *samādhi*. Only when *samādhi* has been achieved can Vipassanā meditation be practised.

“Even the Buddha, when he made the vow to sit and meditate until he attained Awakening, had much difficulty in achieving *samādhi* during the early part of the night. He was distracted by the forces of Māra and his mind wandered here and there. It was only when *samādhi* was attained that Right Knowledge came to him, enabling him to attain full Awakening. So you must understand that *samādhi* is very important.

“This is a gradual training, a gradual doing, a gradual practice,” Sayagyi said. “We must advance step by step. We have three important basic factors: *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. *Sīla* is the base. It’s the means by which physical and verbal immorality is kept under control. *Samādhi*, achieved through Ānāpāna meditation, is the means through which immoral thoughts are held in abeyance. *Paññā*, achieved through Vipassanā meditation, totally eliminates, by stages, all impurities.

“Only when a person has *sīla* can he acquire *samādhi*. And only with *samādhi* can he acquire *paññā*. *Paññā* cannot be acquired without *samādhi* and without *sīla* there can be no *samādhi*.”

The Seven Stages of Purification

Then Sayagyi explained the seven steps of purification that are found in a discussion between the Buddha’s chief disciple

Sāriputta and a bhikkhu named Puṇṇa,¹ the son of Mantāṇi. These same seven stages of purification are used to structure *The Path of Purification* by Ashin Mahā-Buddhaghosa. When Venerable Sāriputta questioned Venerable Puṇṇa concerning the reason a person should follow the Buddha's Teachings, Puṇṇa said it was for the ultimate goal reached through the seven stages of purification. He compared these stages to seven different chariots that King Pasenadi of Kosala might use in relay if he had to go from Sāvattthi to Sāketa on urgent business. The seven chariots are like the seven stages of purification. These are: (1) purification of morality, (2) purification of the mind, or consciousness, (3) purification of view, (4) purification by overcoming doubt, (5) purification of knowledge and vision of what is the Path and of what is not the Path, (6) purification by knowledge and vision of progress along the Path, and finally, (7) purification of knowledge and vision.

“The base is purification of morality,” Sayagyi explained. “This means purity of physical and verbal conduct. Only after achieving this can one achieve purification of the mind, the result of *samādhi*. This means purity of thoughts. All the other steps of purification, from purification of views on up, come under the heading of Right Knowledge. They are achieved through Vipassanā meditation, through insight. So here again you can see the importance of *samādhi*, because without it you cannot practise Vipassanā successfully.”

Mindfulness of Breathing

“Now then, you'll be meditating in the hall all day, trying your best with a lot of energy and sweat to keep the mind steady, trying to prevent it from wandering. But when evening

¹*The Middle Length Sayings*, I 189–194.

comes you'll come out and take a stroll. And as you do, what happens? You have to open your eyes and you can't help but gaze up to the far horizon. And when you do that, your thoughts immediately begin to dwell on the objects you see and whatever *samādhi* you attained vanishes. That is why, in the old days, bhikkhus sought the seclusion of caves and forests, and there in the darkness, without even the sound of a falling leaf to disturb them, they meditated. Yet some of them were not able to achieve the degree of *samādhi* required. Why is this?"

Sayagyi U Ba Khin, when teaching students at the International Meditation Centre in Yangon, gave this answer: "The Buddha said that the seeker of Right Knowledge must seek a proper teacher. The Buddha, of course, is our greatest teacher. And then there are those who have become his true followers. Here in our centre, due to our *pāramīs*, we have been able to help and guide many to reach that level of *samādhi*. It's very important, however, that what we do here be in strict accordance with the Buddha's Teachings as laid down in the Pāli texts."

And then Sayagyi would quote from *The Path of Purification*.¹

The sign, the in-breath, the out-breath: these three are not the object of a single mind moment. He who does not know these three things cannot obtain development.

The sign, the in-breath, the out-breath: these three are not the object of a single mind moment. He who knows these three things can obtain development.

¹Chapter VIII, ¶ 201.

In explaining mindfulness of breathing, Venerable Buddhaghosa gives several similes in *The Path of Purification*.¹ One comparison is the simile of the gate-keeper. “Just as a gate-keeper doesn’t examine people inside and outside the town, asking ‘Who are you? Where have you come from? Where are you going? What have you got in your hand?’—for these are not his duty—but he does examine each (person) as he arrives at the gate, so too, the incoming breaths that have gone inside and the outgoing breaths that have gone outside are not the (meditator’s) duty, but they are part of his duty each time they arrive at the gate (of the nostril) itself.”

And there is the simile of the saw. “Suppose there is a tree trunk on a level piece of ground, and a man cuts it with a saw. The man’s mindfulness is established by the saw’s teeth where they touch the tree trunk. He doesn’t give attention to the teeth as they approach and recede, though they are not unknown to him as they do so. And he manifests effort, carries out a task and achieves an effect. The tree trunk is like the spot for fixing attention. The in-breaths and out-breaths are like the saw’s teeth. Just as the man’s mindfulness is established by the saw’s teeth where they touch the tree trunk, so too the meditator—having established mindfulness at the tip of the nose or on the upper lip, without paying attention to the in-breaths and out-breaths as they approach and recede, though they are not unknown to him as they do so—puts forth effort, carries out his task and achieves a result.”

With effort, the body and mind of an energetic person become wieldy. Imperfections come to be abandoned in the energetic person and his applied thoughts are stilled. Fetters are abandoned in the energetic person and his inherent tendencies come to be done away with.

¹Chapter VIII, ¶ 200–203.

So these three things are not the object of a single mind moment. Nevertheless, they are not unknown. The meditator's mind doesn't become distracted. He makes the effort, carries out the task, and achieves an effect.

Yo ca pubbe pamajjitvā pacchā so nappamajjati

So 'maṃ lokam pabhāseti abbhā mutto va candimā.

He whose mindfulness of in-breath and out-breath is perfect, well-developed, and gradually brought to growth according to the Buddha's Teachings, he illumines the world like the full moon freed from a cloud.

Dhammapada v. 172

Ānāpāna is the meditation practised by all the Buddhas and their major disciples. The Buddha has said that it is very refined, subtle, and powerful. It requires good concentration and good intelligence and as such is not suitable for those with feeble concentration and low intelligence. Just as a very fine, high quality cloth requires a very fine needle, and a still finer awl is required to bore a hole in the needle, so also in Ānāpāna, which is like a fine, high quality cloth, a fine concentration and a fine intelligence commensurate with that concentration are required.

So you see, when you meditate, you shouldn't breathe too rigorously or roughly. Although it isn't stated in the texts, sometimes it isn't easy for beginners to feel the passage of the breath at the start. So they may have to breathe a little stronger than usual in order to feel the breath. When you have practised in this manner for some time, you'll come to know the feeling of the breath at the base of the nose. You must try to retain that feeling, and when you have practised for some time, it will be

easy to do this, drawing your attention to the feeling, thereby keeping your mind steady.

Here you'll find old students coming to the centre on Sundays, and they'll sit for one or two hours without changing their posture. You'll find that when your mind becomes calm and steady, you too will be able to sit like them without much discomfort. And also a calm and steady mind will be of great assistance in your day-to-day life. If you're a student, you'll find that it's a great help to you in your studies. As Venerable Webu Sayadaw, the reputed Arahant of Myanmar, said when he visited IMC-Yangon during the time Sayagyi U Ba Khin was teaching there, "It is work that will yield much benefit, right now in this life, and in the future too."

So try your best to achieve *samādhi*.

DAY TWO: EVENING DISCOURSE

Taming the Mind

The Buddha said:

Bhikkhus, I do not know of any single thing that is as difficult to control as the untamed mind. Indeed, the untamed mind cannot be controlled.

Bhikkhus, I do not know of any single thing that is as easy to control as the tamed mind. Indeed, the tamed mind is easily controlled.

Bhikkhus, I do not know of any other single thing that is as conducive to great loss as the untamed mind. The untamed mind indeed leads to great loss.

Bhikkhus, I do not know of any other single thing that is as conducive to great profit as the tamed mind. Indeed, the tamed mind leads to great profit.

Bhikkhus, I do not know of any other single thing that brings such woe as the mind that is untamed, uncontrolled, unguarded and unrestrained. Such a mind indeed brings great woe.

Bhikkhus, I know of no other single thing that brings such bliss as the mind that is tamed, controlled, guarded and restrained. Such a mind does indeed bring great bliss.

The Gradual Sayings, I 4-5

The Gradual Training

One time a Brahman layman named Gaṇaka-Moggallāna went to the Buddha when he was staying near Sāvatti in the monastery built by Mother Visākhā.¹ Gaṇaka-Moggallāna had a question to ask. He pointed out first that in this life many things were done gradually, step by step. Mother Visākhā's palace was built step by step up to the last flight of stairs. Brahmans trained gradually when they learned their sacred scriptures, the three Vedas. Someone learning archery had to practise and learn his skill gradually. Men dealing in business affairs learned to calculate by degrees. "Is it not possible, O Gotama," he asked the Buddha, "to lay down a similar gradual training, gradual activities, a gradual practice with regard to your Doctrine and discipline?"

"It is possible," the Buddha answered him. "Just as a skilled horse trainer, when he has a beautiful thoroughbred, first of all gets it used to wearing the bit and then gives it further training, in similar fashion, the Perfect One (the Tathāgata), when he accepts a man who is to be trained, first of all disciplines him."

And the Buddha explained to Gaṇaka-Moggallāna the various steps to be taken when training in the Dhamma. "First," the Buddha said, "he who is to be trained must acquire moral habits." Once morality has been developed the Buddha taught control over the senses. "Having seen a material shape with the eye," he said, "don't be entranced by the general appearance or by the details. For if your sight is uncontrolled, desire and dejection may flow in; evil, unskillful states of mind may flow in." The same control must be maintained over the other senses: hearing, smell, taste, touch-feeling, and mental states.

¹*The Middle Length Sayings*, III 52–57.

Next, the Buddha taught moderation in eating. One should eat after carefully considering that food is not taken for fun, out of indulgence, or for personal charm and beauty. Food is taken in quantities just sufficient to maintain the body and keep it going, so that it will be unharmed, and so one can practise the higher way of life. With moderation in eating acquired, next comes vigilance. One should cleanse the mind of obstructing mental states at all times: when walking and sitting during the day, and when lying down at night. When one goes to bed, one should be intent on the thought of getting up after resting.

After developing vigilance, one should work on being mindful and clearly conscious of everything one is doing. For us, during these first few days, this would mean striving to be mindful and clearly conscious of the spot, of the in-breath, and of the out-breath. Once mindfulness is accomplished, one should overcome the five hindrances. Through mindfulness, we can cleanse the mind of covetousness and ill will. Free of ill will, we will be compassionate and merciful to all. And we eliminate sloth and torpor. Perceiving the light, we are free of sloth and torpor. We eliminate restlessness and worry so that we remain calm, with a tranquil mind. And getting rid of doubt we are unperplexed concerning profitable states.

With the five hindrances eliminated, it's possible to develop the absorption states—the *jhānas*. This is especially the case for bhikkhus whose lives are very pure. Because of their great purity, they're able to attain these high states of concentration. For us, as laymen, it's sufficient to acquire just a good level of concentration.

The Buddha concluded his talk by saying that those who had not yet reached full Awakening, who were still learners, worked in hope of attaining liberation, and that those who had reached full Awakening lived abiding in ease, here and now.

The Necessity to Walk Along the Path

At the conclusion of the talk, Gaṇaka-Moggallāna had another question. He asked whether, after being given this gradual training, everyone attained the supreme goal of Nibbāna. The Buddha answered that some attained the goal, some did not. So Gaṇaka-Moggallāna asked why, since Nibbāna exists, the path leading to it exists, and the Buddha is there to show the way, why then, did some people reach the goal but others did not?

The Buddha asked him if he knew the way to Rājagaha. Yes, was the reply. So the Buddha pointed out that if a man asked the way to Rājagaha, and after being given directions by Gaṇaka-Moggallāna, didn't go as told, he would go the wrong way. A different person, who followed the directions, would reach Rājagaha. So, Rājagaha exists, the way to it exists, and there's someone to give directions. Why would one man go the wrong way and another man go the right way? "What can I do?" Gaṇaka-Moggallāna said. "I only show the way."

"Similarly," said the Buddha, "Nibbāna exists, the way leading to Nibbāna exists, and I exist as the advisor. But some of my disciples, after being instructed by me, attain the supreme goal, while others do not attain it. What can I do? I only show the way."

And this Gaṇaka-Moggallāna understood. He said to the Buddha, "Those who have no way of making a living; who become bhikkhus without having faith; who are crafty, fraudulent, deceitful; who are unbalanced and puffed up; who are shifty, scurrilous and of loose talk; who do not guard their senses; who are not moderate in eating; who are not intent on vigilance but are indifferent to recluseship, not of keen respect for the training; who like abundance; who are lax, taking the lead in backsliding, shirking the burden of seclusion; who are indolent, of feeble energy, of confused mindfulness, not

clearly conscious, not concentrated but of wandering minds; who are weak in wisdom, drivellers—they have nothing in common with the Buddha. It is those who have the opposite good qualities who are in communion with the Buddha.” And he praised the teachings of the Buddha as the highest of teachings and requested to take the Triple Refuge.

Now we can see from this talk that the Buddha emphasized the importance of working step by step and doing the work ourselves. No one can concentrate our mind for us, no one can purify our mind for us. A teacher can only tell us what to do. We must do the work ourselves.

In his talk to Gaṇaka-Moggallāna, the Buddha said he taught his disciples to be mindful, but he did not give full instructions concerning mindfulness at that time. These instructions are to be found in other discourses by the Buddha—in the *Ānāpānasati-sutta*, for example, the discourse on the mindfulness of breathing.¹

Mindfulness of Breathing

When the Buddha began to teach, many people were attracted to him, and soon there were many bhikkhus to be taught. Those who had worked and attained the goal taught the newly ordained bhikkhus. They established the new bhikkhus in the moral training and then taught them how to attain tranquillity and insight. On one occasion, many bhikkhus assembled together with the Buddha. He looked around the Order of Bhikkhus and said, “This assembly, bhikkhus, is without idle words, this assembly has no idle words. It is established on the pure path. An Order of Bhikkhus such as this company is a company worthy of veneration, of honour, of gifts, of salutation with joined palms by those who bear in mind, ‘It is an

¹*The Middle Length Sayings*, III 121–129.

incomparable field of merit for the world.’ Bhikkhus, an order of bhikkhus such as this company is a company to which if little is given it becomes much; if much is given it becomes more.” He declared that there were bhikkhus in the Order who were established in all four stages of Awakening and others who were practising correctly in order to reach the goal. And he gives a detailed description of the work to be done.

Here are the details which apply to our work here concerning mindfulness of the in-breath and out-breath. For preparation we can develop good mental attitudes. The Buddha mentioned four attitudes to develop: loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), altruistic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). People living in Buddhist countries try to work on these in their everyday lives, and we can do the same. Working or playing, whenever we can feel disinterested love towards others, compassion for others, sympathetic joy when others succeed, and a balanced, calm mind—an equanimous mind—then we will be better disposed to live moral lives, and it will be easier to concentrate our minds.

The instructions given next by the Buddha are most important for us here as we practise mindfulness of breathing. “Mindfulness of the in-breath and out-breath, when developed and frequently practised, brings great reward and advantages,” the Buddha said. “And how is this done?”

“A bhikkhu retires to a forest, to the foot of a tree, or to a solitary place, seats himself cross-legged, body erect with attentiveness fixed before him. Attentively he breathes in, attentively he breathes out. ... He comprehends, ‘Calming the activity of thought I breathe in, calming the activity of thought I breathe out.’ Thus he trains himself. ‘Concentrating the mind I breathe in, concentrating the mind I breathe out. Reflecting on impermanence I breathe in, reflecting on impermanence I breathe out.’ This is the way he trains himself.

Thus, O bhikkhus, when mindfulness of the in-breath and out-breath is developed and frequently practised, there are great rewards and great advantages.

“Whenever the bhikkhu is training himself to inhale and exhale while being aware of rapture, joy, or the mental activities, or while calming down the activity of thought—at such times he dwells in the Contemplation of Sensation, he is full of energy, clearly conscious, attentive, after subduing worldly greed and grief ...

“Whenever the bhikkhu trains himself to inhale and exhale while being aware of the mind or while composing the mind or while concentrating the mind or while setting the mind free—at such times he dwells in Contemplation of the Mind, full of energy, clearly conscious, attentive, having subdued worldly greed and grief. Without mindfulness and clear comprehension, there is indeed no attention of in-breath and out-breath, I say.

“Awareness of the in-breath and out-breath, thus developed, and frequently practised, brings the four Applications of Mindfulness to full perfection.” So these are the instructions of the Buddha.

Let us underline the important points to be remembered in developing concentration through mindfulness of breathing, drawing on another important discourse of the Buddha, the Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta.¹

The text says, “He breathes out with mindfulness, breathes in with mindfulness.” (*Sa sato va assasati, sato va passasati.*) This means that the meditator, in practising Ānāpāna, should be mindful of each and every out-breath and in-breath. No breath should be allowed to pass without mindfulness or awareness.

¹*The Gradual Sayings*, II 143.

The meditator summons up mindfulness in front (*parimukkhāṃ satim upaṭṭhāpetvā*). The verb we translate here by “summons up” could be translated literally by “making present.” This underlines the importance of being actively mindful of the present moment and of the object of concentration. We place our attention before us at the entrance of the nostrils, directly mindful of the out-breath, the in-breath, and the place where the air touches, without letting the mind wander to other objects. Mindfulness is always kept on the end of the nose or the upper lip.

We should be mindful without interruption (*satim avijahanto*), for if a person is forgetful or not fully aware, the development of mindfulness of breathing is impossible. The meditative practice cannot be successfully carried out. Thus, we should be mindful at all times (*sato kāri*).

We should contemplate with wisdom (*paññāya salla-kkhetabbam*), led by mindfulness. This means thoroughly knowing every out-breath and in-breath.

Ashin Buddhaghosa says that the in-breaths and out-breaths strike the end of the nose for a long-nosed man and strike the upper lip for a short-nosed man. The important thing for us to remember is to fix the mental concentration on the point where the touch of the air is evident.

Here are three points which will be helpful in practising mindfulness of breathing:

1. Be mindful of each breath going out and coming in. Make a mental note of every breath without missing any one.
2. Maintain without a break uninterrupted mindfulness of each out-going and in-coming breath.

3. Establish mental concentration in the area at the end of the nose and upper lip, and observe each successive touch of the air thoroughly and diligently.

The Pāli word for meditation, mental culture, training the mind, is *bhāvanā*. As we said before, there are two kinds of meditation: development of tranquillity, which comes with concentration, and development of insight, wisdom.

“Bhikkhus, there are these two diseases,” the Buddha said.¹ “What two? Disease of the body and disease of the mind. Bhikkhus, beings can be seen who are free from suffering from bodily disease for one year, ... (or up to) even a hundred years. But, bhikkhus, it’s hard to find in the world beings who are free from mental disease even for one moment, except for those in whom the taints are destroyed (that is to say, Arahats).”

Ānāpāna meditation, which leads to concentration and tranquillity, is not unique to Buddhism. This type of meditation can be known outside the period during which a Buddha’s Teachings are practised. There are forty methods for this type of meditation found in the Buddhist texts and one can reach the highest absorption states with these methods. These states, no matter how pure and high they may be, are still mental creations. They are mind-made, conditioned and compounded. They are not Ultimate Reality. And they are not essential for the realization of Nibbāna.

If one can attain these states one can cleanse the mind of impurities temporarily. As long as one remains in such a pure state, the mind is pure. But the deep-rooted tendency towards impurity is still there. It’s only through insight that one eliminates these deep-seated impurities. This is what is unique to

¹ *Aṅguttara-nikāya* II 143 (*The Gradual Sayings* II 146f.).

Buddhism. But we should clearly bear in mind that mindfulness is essential for insight. We have had a chance now to appreciate how difficult it can be.

At the start you will find it extremely difficult to get your mind to concentrate on your breathing. You will be astonished how your mind runs away. It doesn't stay, not even for a few seconds! So you'll need to breathe intentionally. You'll find that you need to make an effort to breathe continuously and steadfastly. Then after a certain period, you'll experience just that split second when your mind is fully concentrated on your breathing; when you won't even hear sounds that are nearby; when no external world exists for you. This slight moment is such a tremendous experience for you, full of joy, happiness, and tranquillity, that you'll want it to continue. But you can't make it continue. Yet, if you go on practising this steadfastly and continuously, you may get back the experience again and again and for longer and longer periods.

Ānāpāna is the meditation practised by all the Buddhas and their major disciples. The Buddha said it's very refined, subtle, and powerful. It requires good concentration and good intelligence and is therefore not suitable for those with feeble concentration and low intelligence.

We must be mindful of what Sayagyi called the three-in-one: the spot, the in-breath, and the out-breath. We illustrated the three-in-one when we quoted from Buddhaghosa's *Path of Purification* this morning. Now let us cite another example he gives, the example of the bell.¹

"When the meditator's gross in-breaths and out-breaths have ceased, his consciousness occurs with the sign of the subtle in-breaths and out-breaths as its object. And when that

¹*The Path of Purification*, Chap. VIII, ¶ 206ff.

has ceased, it goes on occurring with the successively subtler sign as its object. How?

“Suppose a man struck a bronze bell with a big iron bar and a loud sound resulted. The gross sound would be the object of his consciousness. Then, when the gross sound died down, the subtle sound that continued would be the object of his consciousness. It would go on like this with the sign of each successive sound, more and more subtle, as the object of consciousness. ... For while other meditation subjects become clearer at each higher stage, this one doesn't. In fact, as the meditator continues to develop it, it becomes more subtle at each higher stage. It even comes to the point where it's no longer manifest. When this happens the meditator shouldn't get up, shake out his leather seat and go away. He shouldn't get up thinking, 'Shall I ask the teacher?' or 'Is my meditation subject lost?', for by going away and disturbing his posture, the meditation subject will have to be started again. So he should continue sitting and substitute the place where he felt the breath for the sensation of the breath itself.”

When Sayagyi U Ba Khin spoke of Ānāpāna meditation, he remarked on how very subtle, very deep, and how very difficult it is. Only Buddhas and major disciples like Sāriputta and Moggallāna practised it to attain concentration, *samādhi*. It is for those with great *pāramīs* and the very fact that you are here practising it indicates that you have enough within you. *Pāramī* means perfection. We are where we are today because of our actions in the past. The Buddha described how incredibly difficult it is to be reborn a human being. Our chances are as small as the chances of a blind turtle swimming in the ocean putting its head through a round buoy floating there. The chances of living during a period when the Buddha's Teachings are available are much smaller.

Depending on how much preparation a person has made, progress in meditation will be fast or slow. When Sayagyi U Ba Khin first learned about Vipassanā meditation, he asked for instruction, and Ānāpāna meditation was explained to him. He tried it and right away he began to see lights. When he did his first full course, he was given Vipassanā on the second day. His progress was so fast he did not need to do several days of Ānāpāna. Mother Sayamagyi also saw lights the first time she tried Ānāpāna, and that was trying it in a casual way for only ten minutes or thereabouts.

Not all of us will be so quick, however. And when some of the things that can happen are described, we should not be discouraged if we do not have these experiences.

In Ānāpāna meditation, in order to enable you to know the in-breath and out-breath, you should breathe deliberately at first. In this way, the passage of the breath will become more and more obvious. When this happens, just ease your mind into this path and keep knowing the in-breaths and out-breaths as they occur naturally. As your breathing becomes softer and softer, at first there will be long and short breaths, as there is still entry and exit of the air. But eventually, the length diminishes, until it almost disappears, and all three—in-breath, out-breath and the object of concentration—merge at a point at the base of the nose on the upper lip. At this point, on the upper lip, you will feel a slight sensation of warmth which is characteristic of air. You must concentrate sharply on this point and as you do so, your mind will calm down. You will have what is called *citta-ekaggata*, one-pointedness of mind, and then you will have *samādhi*.

As you meditate and achieve one-pointedness of mind, the mind calms down, and the first characteristics of a calm mind will arise, both physically and mentally. First, satisfaction (*pīti*) will arise, followed by pleasure (*sukha*), and then the

indications of a calm mind, such as seeing light, will arise. These also indicate that a state of purity exists. The Buddha said that the mind or consciousness itself is pure and bright, but that the impingement on it of the forces of impurity—greed, hatred, and ignorance—have hidden these qualities. As you meditate, you're removing little by little the forces of greed, hatred, and ignorance from the mind, making it calm down. As we saw, it is stated in *The Path of Purification* that the bhikkhu practising Ānāpāna must not search for the point of contact at the base of the nose without being aware of both the in-breath and the out-breath. He must know all three. So you see, it's useless to concentrate on this point while thinking of this and that. Also, it's stated in the texts that with awareness (*sati*) as the rope and wisdom (*paññā*) as the whip, the bhikkhu should concentrate and search for this point of contact.

You'll find that after some time the natural characteristic of the air passing in and out at one point will become very pronounced, and you must pay full attention to it and not let it slip away. Nevertheless, it will diminish and eventually disappear. When it disappears, you must reopen the path by breathing in and out consciously and begin to repeat the process. The first indication of purity will arise for the person who has practised like this repeatedly for some time. This indication is not the same for everyone. According to the texts, it may appear like cotton wool, stars, or pearls. To some, it may resemble smoke, clouds, a spider web, a spray of flowers, the moon, or the sun. These indications should come if you are following the right path. Perhaps it may appear as a flash of light, or it may appear like the light at dawn. It won't appear, however, simply because you want it to, and it won't appear through your wishful thinking or prayers. What you must remember is that just as people earn money by working for it at their

appropriate jobs, so also you must work properly here to achieve this indication.

If there is a desire in you for this indication to arise, it won't do so because your mind will then not be free from desire, or from greed. This indication only arises when a person is free from desire and so long as attachment is predominant, it won't arise.

As you concentrate at the base of the nose with full awareness of the in-breath and out-breath, your thoughts are free of greed, hatred, and ignorance, and such a state of mind is called *samādhī*. The moment you become aware of having lost this awareness of the three-in-one, you must reopen the path by knowingly breathing in and out. As you regain this path, your awareness will arise again, and then it will disappear—for thoughts will surely arise. This awareness that you are struggling for is very precious, and many are the people who have attained Nibbāna based on it.

DAY THREE: MORNING DISCOURSE

The Summum Bonum

Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti.

sabbarasaṃ dhammaraso jināti.

Sabbaratiṃ dhammarati jināti.

taṇhakkhaya sabbadukkhāṃ jināti.

The gift of the Ultimate Truth, the Dhamma,
surpasses all gifts.

The flavour of the Dhamma surpasses all flavours.

Delight in the Dhamma surpasses all delights.

The destruction of craving overcomes all suffering.

Dhammapada v. 354

While staying at Jetavana, the Buddha gave this teaching to Sakka, the chief of the *devas* of the realm of the thirty-three deities.¹ There was an assembly of these devas during which four questions were raised: “Which gift is the best gift? Which is the best flavour? Which is the greatest delight? Why is the destruction of craving said to be supreme over all other things?” None of the devas were able to answer these questions. For twelve years they looked for an answer everywhere in the ten thousand world systems. Finally they went to the realm of the Four Great Kings who are the guardians of the cardinal points of the compass (north, east, south, and west). When they heard the questions, the Four Great Kings suggested that Sakka, the King of the Devas, would know the answer. But when they approached him, he said, “My friends,

¹*Buddhist Legends*, III 236–239.

only a Buddha can answer these questions. Where's the Buddha residing now?" And they told Sakka that the Buddha was residing at Jetavana. So they went to ask the Buddha. Sakka posed all four questions and the Buddha answered, "Well said, great king! I fulfilled the *pāramīs*, the Perfections, which culminated in making the Five Great Gifts, I attained to Omniscience, in order to resolve doubts such as these. Here's the answer: the gift of the Ultimate Truth, the Dhamma, is the best of gifts. The flavour of the Dhamma is the best of flavours. Delight in the Dhamma is the best of delights. And as for the destruction of craving, this is how men attain full Awakening, Arahatsip. Therefore, it's supreme over all other things." And the Buddha pronounced the stanza we quoted at the beginning.

As we have already mentioned, the Second Noble Truth is the Origin of Suffering, and included in this is the fact that the world is conditioned. This world is based on the law of cause and effect. For every effect there's a cause. If we do good deeds, we will get good results. If we do evil deeds, we will suffer. If it were possible to always do good deeds, we wouldn't have suffering. There are good deeds which lead to great happiness in the sense of worldly happiness. If we give food to a bird, we will greatly benefit. If we give food to a human being, we will benefit even more. The more highly developed in purity the person to whom we make a gift, the greater the reward. There have been people who gave robes to a non-teaching Buddha (a Pacceka-Buddha), to a teaching Buddha or to their chief disciples. People have given great offerings of food, monasteries, and medicine for the bhikkhus. It's impossible for us to imagine what great benefits come from such gifts.

But in this stanza, we see that just one single stanza of four lines concerning the Ultimate Truth, the Dhamma, taught

by a Buddha, is of infinitely greater value than all these other gifts. This is because through the Dhamma we can go beyond earthly happiness. No matter how happy we may be in the conditioned world, no matter how long we are happy, eventually that happiness will end. Eventually we will suffer. Only through the Buddha-Dhamma can suffering come to an end.

From this, it becomes evident why the flavour of the Dhamma surpasses all other flavours. It includes the thirty-seven factors of Awakening which lead to Nibbāna, and Nibbāna transcends the happiness of the conditioned world, since it's unconditioned, without suffering.

Delight in the Dhamma surpasses all others because when we delight in it, there's an inspiration to work for an end of suffering. Finally, the destruction of craving is the actual ending of suffering. It's the actual arriving at the goal: Full Awakening, Arahatsip. And this is greater than anything.

When the Buddha finished teaching the Dhamma to the deities, Sakka paid respects and made a request. "Venerable sir," he said, "since the gift of the Dhamma is so precious, why do you not have the merit of the gift of the Dhamma shared by us? In the future, when you teach the Dhamma to the Community of Bhikkhus, share the merit with us, venerable sir." So the Buddha called together the Community of Bhikkhus and told them, "Bhikkhus, from this day on, whenever a discourse is given on a special occasion, or a discourse for an ordinary occasion, or even when words of thanks are recited, you are to share merits with all beings."

So that's why we share merits after giving a talk or after meditating, as meditation is practising the Dhamma and is therefore of great merit. You will remember that we emphasized how important mental volition is in doing good deeds or bad deeds. In some planes of existence, it's very difficult to do good deeds. But it's possible to have sympathetic joy, to

rejoice in the good deeds of others. Since this is a mental action, it's very powerful. This can be reinforced by speech. That's why the students respond, "*Sādhū, sādhū, sādhū,*" when the teacher shares merits, for this is Pāli for "Well said" or "Well done." And many other beings can join us.

The Story of Jotika¹

The story of Jotika gives us an illustration of how the taste of the Dhamma surpasses all others. Jotika had great *pāramīs*; he had made very large gifts to Buddhas of the past. When he was born during the time of Buddha Gotama, he was very rich. His wife was very beautiful. They lived in a house made of gems and precious stones. But one day, Jotika went to the monastery and heard the Buddha teaching. He decided to leave behind all his wealth and become a bhikkhu. So he lived with only his robes and bowl as a bhikkhu, and when he attained Arahantship, all his former wealth disappeared. One day, some of his fellow bhikkhus asked him if he missed his palace or his wife. When he answered no, they went to the Buddha. "Venerable sir," they said, "this bhikkhu has told a lie." They couldn't imagine that Jotika didn't miss his former life. But the Buddha told them, "Bhikkhus, it's quite true that my son has no longing for any of these things." So we can see that the taste and happiness of the Dhamma is the noblest, the highest, and the best.

The Five Hindrances²

Something which is the highest and the best isn't easy to attain. You have no doubt noticed as you work that training

¹*Buddhist Legends*, III 313–331.

²See Nyanaponika Thera, "The Five Mental Hindrances", *The Wheel*, No. 26.

the mind is very difficult. There are many difficulties, but in particular, there are five which come under the heading of the hindrances (*nīvarāna*). They are: (1) sensuous desire, (2) ill will, (3) sloth and torpor, (4) restlessness and worry, and finally, (5) skeptical doubt. You have perhaps encountered some or all of these hindrances while working for a concentrated mind these last few days. You already have the best tool for getting rid of the hindrances. You have your breath and the spot below the nose where you can anchor your attention. Whenever you are aware that the hindrances are there, you can use slightly harder breathing to shake them off.

As long as we are “worldlings”—that is to say, before reaching the first stage of Awakening—we cannot completely eliminate any of these hindrances. But while the mind is concentrated, they aren’t there. Both a good and an evil thought cannot occur in the mind at the same time. Only one thought can occur at a time. The mind’s so fast it may seem two things are going on at once, but in fact each thought is alone. In that way, the very act of being aware of the hindrance eliminates it for a moment. The thought that knows or recognizes the hindrance comes after the hindrance itself. This is a very useful moment for us to pull back the mind and concentrate it. Instead of feeling depressed or disappointed in ourselves because we have lost our concentration, we should rejoice that we noticed.

So we can temporarily eliminate the hindrances, knowing that their final and complete elimination will only come through attaining full Awakening. But we begin to eliminate them with the first stage of Awakening. The Sotāpanna has no more skeptical doubt. He has experienced the Ultimate Truth, even if only briefly, and he has no doubt concerning the possibility of reaching Awakening and the Path leading to Awakening. When one reaches the third stage (*Anāgāmi*) all

sensuous desire and ill will are eradicated. It's only at the end, when one is an Arahant, that sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry are ended.

In the Pāli canon the five hindrances are called impediments that cloud the mind and stultify insight. If the meditator hasn't overcome the five hindrances, his insight will lack strength and power, and it will be impossible for him to know his own good, the good of others, and the good of both. He won't be able to realize the super-human state of distinctive achievement, the knowledge and vision enabling him to attain liberation. If he overcomes the five hindrances, he'll have strong insight, and he'll be able to recognize what's good for himself, for others, and for both. He *will* be able to attain liberation.

Sensuous desire is like water mixed with many colours. In other words, we're attracted by what seems beautiful to us. Ill will is like boiling water. When we're full of aversion and hatred there's heat and we're agitated. Sloth and torpor, laziness and groggy feelings, are like water covered with moss. It's as if we were clogged up. Restlessness and worry are like agitated water whipped up by the wind. Here, worry means feeling discontented or feeling remorse for having done bad deeds or for having neglected to do good deeds. With this restlessness and remorse in us, we can't sit still. Finally, skeptical doubt is like turbid, muddy water. We can't see clearly when we are doubting. We find we're wavering, we can't make a decision. "Should I do this? Or should I do that?" we wonder. It's as if we were divided in two. And the more we dwell on what we have doubts about, the worse it gets. We no longer want to make any effort. We're no longer sure what good action is or what bad actions are, what we should do. We can no longer judge things according to their true value. We have doubts about the Buddha or the teacher, about

the Truth and about those who have kept the Teachings alive. We have doubts about cause and effect. In short, we're pretty miserable.

Now how can a meditator get rid of the five hindrances? The Pāli texts tell us, "In this regard the meditator who knows there's sensuous desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, or skeptical doubt in him knows, 'There's sensuous desire or ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, or skeptical doubt in me.' He knows how each hindrance arises, how each comes to be in him. He knows how elimination of each hindrance, once it has arisen, comes to be. And he knows how in the future a state comes to be where the hindrances don't arise."¹

With Ānāpāna we can see this very clearly. We sit here working to keep our minds on one spot, below the nose, and on the in-breath and out-breath. Suddenly the mind's somewhere else. That's knowing how the hindrances come to be. We don't need to analyze the particular thought or feeling. We don't need to trace it back to our childhood or back to a past life, even if we could. Seeing how these hindrances arise automatically, despite our efforts to concentrate, is enough. And how do we eliminate them? A few conscious breaths, a few deliberate breaths, and they are gone. It may seem that they are still there. A strong desire may arise. We become aware of it. We breathe a little harder. And for that moment, even if only for a split second, our mind is free from the hindrance. If it's a strong hindrance, a very similar thought or feeling that resembles the first one, its identical twin, may arise. And we will need to start again with a few conscious breaths. But it can be reassuring to know that in this way we

¹Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (Majjhima-nikāya, No. 10, I 60l); *Middle Length Sayings*, I 77f.

are eliminating a whole string of hindrances. It's not the same one coming back each time.

And how will we avoid the arising of these hindrances? If we have clearly understood the first two steps, the last step will be obvious: mindfulness. Working on Right Concentration here and now is the only way to avoid the arising of the five hindrances in the future.

If we truly wish to make an end of suffering, we will realize how important this work is. The Buddha said that a man whose heart is overwhelmed by unrestrained covetousness (that is, sensuous desire) will do what he shouldn't do and will neglect to do what he ought to do. Because of this, his reputation and his happiness will be ruined. A man whose heart is overwhelmed by ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, or by skeptical doubts will do what he shouldn't do and will neglect to do what he ought to do. Because of this, his reputation and his happiness will be ruined.

But a noble disciple who has seen these five defilements of the mind will give them up. He'll be regarded as one who is of great wisdom, abundant wisdom, clear-sighted, well-endowed with wisdom.

Elsewhere, the Buddha said that the hindrances are like the five impurities that result in gold not being pliant and wieldy, that make it lack brilliance, that make it brittle and difficult to fashion. The five impurities for gold are other metals mixed with it: iron, copper, tin, lead, and silver. But if these baser metals are separated from the gold, it will be pliant and wieldy, brilliant and firm, and one can fashion whatever ornaments one wants with it. Similarly, when the mind has five impurities, five hindrances, it's not pliant and wieldy, it lacks radiant lucidity and firmness, it can't concentrate well upon the eradication of the taints. But when the mind's freed of the five hindrances, it will be pliant and wieldy, it will have

radiant lucidity and firmness, and it will concentrate well upon the eradication of the taints. It will be possible to direct the mind to any state that can be realized by the higher mental faculties, and if the other conditions are fulfilled, one will acquire the capacity to realize the state.

Now you may be saying to yourself, “There’s another hindrance. What about all this pain! If I didn’t have any pain, I’d be able to concentrate.” But remember, we have been stressing how important the mind is, how important your mental attitude is. And if you look at the five hindrances, you’ll notice that they take place in the mind and emotions. The problem’s not the pain, but rather our attitude to the pain. Because of the pain, we feel aversion, or we feel restless. So, during Ānāpāna, while we aren’t working with sensations throughout the body, we keep coming back to the breath. When we come to Vipassanā, we will deal with the sensations throughout the body.

It may help to remind ourselves how fortunate we are to be doing this work. For so many years, so many lifetimes, our minds have been dominated by these hindrances. If we can reach only one split second during which the mind is calm, tranquil, concentrated, then this is of great benefit, of great significance for us. And we can remind ourselves that we have encountered the Teachings at a very important time.

Those Who Are Becoming Ariyas

On one occasion when Venerable Webu Sayadaw visited the International Meditation Centre in Yangon, he asked Sayagyi U Ba Khin, “Aren’t sentient beings becoming Ariyas, Awakened, even now, at this time, just as in the Buddha’s time?” Sayagyi answered yes. Then Webu Sayadaw asked Sayagyi, “Who are becoming Ariyas in greater numbers, human beings or *devas* and *brahmās*?” Sayagyi replied that

most of those becoming Ariyas would be the *devas* and *brahmās* of the higher realms of existence. You see, at the time of the Buddha's death at the age of eighty, he foresaw that four incalculables and twenty thousand billion sentient beings still remained to reach at least the first stage of Awakening and that for them his Teachings would last five thousand years after his death. This number's difficult to imagine. One incalculable (*asaṅkheyya*) is a number equal to one followed by one hundred and forty zeros.

Most of those who would become Ariyas would do so during what's known as the Vimutti Period, the period of deliverance. That period begins twenty-five hundred years after the Buddha's death. That's why Sayagyi replied in the affirmative to Webu Sayadaw's first question.

To understand why most of those attaining the Ariya state will be *devas* and *brahmās*, we only need look at the population of the world, which is about five billion, I think. A very small fraction of the people in the human plane are likely to become Ariyas.

The Story of Mātikāmātā¹

In his booklet *What Buddhism Is*, Sayagyi U Ba Khin said, "A balanced mind is necessary to balance the unbalanced minds of others." He quoted the Buddha's words, "As a fletcher makes straight his arrow, a wise man makes straight his trembling and unsteady thought, which is difficult to guard, difficult to hold back."² In a talk to Burmese students at IMC-Yangon, Sayagyi told the story of a laywoman who lived during the Buddha's time and who was able to work properly.

¹*Buddhist Legends*, II 1–7.

²*Dhammapada*, v. 33

Sixty bhikkhus went to the Buddha and asked for permission to meditate. The Buddha showed them the method, and they went away to seek a suitable place to live in and practise. They came to the village of Mātikāgāma and decided to stay there to meditate. There was a rich woman in that village called Mātikāmātā. She owned a large estate and respectfully requested the bhikkhus to live there and practise their meditation. She also undertook to provide them with food.

So the bhikkhus stayed there in the monastery built by her. But they agreed that no two bhikkhus should live or sit in the same place, in order to meditate better. After some time, Mātikāmātā asked the bhikkhus what they were doing, and they replied that they were meditating. She asked why, and on being told that meditation produces a calm mind, she asked whether she could practise also in her spare time. The bhikkhus told her that she could practise it too, and accordingly they showed her the technique. They told her that as *samādhi* arose, her mind would become calm and steady until eventually Right Knowledge would come to her.

So she selected a suitable place in her house where she meditated every night as soon as her household duties were over. Very soon, her mind calmed down and satisfaction (*pīti*) arose, and tranquillity (*passaddhi*) and pleasure (*sukha*) arose as well as concentration (*samādhi*). As she continued with her practice of awareness, Vipassanā knowledge came to her without any teacher guiding her, and she eventually became a Sotāpanna, one who has entered the stream to Nibbāna. Later, she became an Anāgāmi, she attained the first three paths and fruition states. Through the *jhānic* states, she obtained the divine eye, divine ear, and the ability to see past lives, and even the ability to read other people's thoughts. You will note that no one had to lecture her on the Dhamma. She did just what she was told to do.

With her ability to read other people's thoughts, she sought the status of the bhikkhus who, she thought, must surely have made greater progress. To her surprise, she found that they hadn't even become Sotāpannas, and she looked for the reasons for their lack of progress. She found that those bhikkhus had given up comfortable lives as laymen and they found that the things lacking in monastic life irritated them so much that their meditation was disturbed. Some wanted a mat to sit on, some wanted sweeter food, etc. In order to satisfy them, the Mātikā lady along with her friends and companions set out to prepare the proper food, collect the mats, and so on, and they supplied the bhikkhus with those the next day.

As each and every bhikkhu received what he had been wanting, they were able to meditate more effectively. In the evening, one of the bhikkhus became an Arahāt with the ability to read other people's thoughts. He sought the progress of the others and learned that they too had become Arahats. Indeed, they all became Arahats at the same time, due to Mātikā's ability to read their thoughts and fulfil their wishes.

On Being Cautious

*Passati passo passantam apassantañ ca passati;
Apassanto apassantam passantañ ca na passati.*

He who sees, sees who can see and who cannot see.
He who cannot see, sees neither the one that does not
see nor the one that sees.

Theragāthā, 61

This is the verse pronounced by Vappa, the second of the group of five disciples to get established in the Dhamma. He spoke this verse on the fifth day of the Buddha's teaching them, after they all attained Arahātship. Sayagyi U Ba Khin

used to quote this verse quite often when he gave Dhamma talks, because, he said, if one becomes a meditation teacher he will have to encounter Māra, who works against the Dhamma. Māra will play his role, attacking from close by and from far away. So one must be very careful. If a person cannot see with his own wisdom, Māra will come and disturb him in various ways.

Sayagyi reminded his close disciples of this, and he said once, “Hey, Māra won’t necessarily come from a long way off. If you aren’t strong in your *anicca* (appreciation of continual change), if you aren’t living with your *anicca*, Māra will attack me through you. He will attack the inner circle, my close disciples.” At one time, Sayagyi put up a notice at IMC-Yangon, saying that when the Dhamma grows it’s necessary for the close disciples to be very careful. Otherwise, Māra will play his part. Through you, he will attack the Dhamma, attack the mission. He will attack everyone.

Mother Sayamagyi’s Beginnings in Meditation and Teaching

We are fortunate to have come into contact with the tradition of a teacher of the standing of Sayagyi U Ba Khin. And we are fortunate to have people like Mother Sayamagyi who can help us combat Māra and meditate correctly. During Sayagyi’s lifetime, in April 1951, when Sayagyi U Chit Tin first started meditating with Sayagyi U Ba Khin, he would come home to his wife, Mother Sayamagyi, and his four-year-old daughter. His daughter wanted to play and his wife wanted some attention. But he wanted to go on with his meditation. So he told Mother Sayamagyi, “You have met U Ba Khin. You can think of him as your teacher and I will explain meditation to you.” So Sayagyi U Chit Tin gave her the preliminaries and explained Ānāpāna to her and to his daughter.

His daughter lay down beside him, doing Ānāpāna. After a few minutes she went to sleep. So you can see that Ānāpāna's good for insomnia. Mother Sayamagi, as we mentioned, saw lights during the first ten minutes or thereabouts, on the first day. On the second day, she saw stars, and on the third day she saw a disc like the moon. On the fourth day, Sayagi U Chit Tin gave her Vipassanā, and she was able to feel sensations all through her body.

But he lost all awareness of sensations. Sayagi U Ba Khin liked to tell the story of how Sayagi U Chit Tin came into his office with tears in his eyes. Sayagi U Ba Khin laughed and pointed out the dangers of trying to pass on the teachings before being told to do so, and he worked with Sayagi U Chit Tin so he could be aware of sensations again.

Sayamagi worked at home for nearly two years. By then, in 1952, the International Meditation Centre in Yangon had been founded. In mid-April 1953, during the Water Festival holidays in Myanmar, there was the first course at IMC-Yangon for the families of the men from Sayagi's office. Sayamagi meditated with forty other students. After her first course, she repeated for nearly one month, and during that month Sayagi U Ba Khin taught her the technique very comprehensively. Starting in May 1953, she dedicated herself to the mission. She and Sayagi U Chit Tin were with Sayagi from May 1953, until his death on January 19, 1971. Sayamagi assisted Sayagi during all that time. She helped with all the students who came to the centre, both Burmese and foreign. Many of them made significant progress in their meditation. She was constantly with Sayagi as he worked with the students.

A retired government official of Myanmar came to the centre when Ven. Webu Sayadaw paid a seven-day visit in June 1953. This was the first time Ven. Webu Sayadaw

visited outside his three meditation centres, which were in Kyaukse, forty miles south of Mandalay; in Shwebo, sixty miles north of Mandalay; and another at his birthplace, Ingyin-bin-taw-ya. He usually spent four months each year in those three places. After his visit to Yangon in 1953, many disciples, such as this ex-government official, wanted him to come to lower Myanmar every year. So he would come to many cities and towns to give blessings and preach the Dhamma so that many could benefit.

After the ex-government official started meditating with Sayagyi in 1953, he was able to make significant progress in his meditation. When Sayagyi left for the office, the official was under Sayamagyi's care and she helped him to progress. He told Sayagyi, "Your disciple's not an ordinary disciple." And he gave her the name of Sayama, meaning lady teacher. From that day, she was known as Sayama and Sayagyi approved of this. Many other people came to the centre and enjoyed the benefits of meditation. Among them, one elderly person, who was a Pāli scholar, addressed her as Mother. So she came to be known as Mother Sayama. After Sayagyi died in 1971, many Western students came to the centre and all of them called her Mother Sayama as well. With time, the honorific "gyi" was added, and today we address her as Mother Sayamagyi.

Mother Sayamagyi and Sayagyi U Chit Tin worked at the centre in Yangon from 1971 to 1978, when they came out on October 12th. While there, they taught along with Sayagyi U Tint Yee, President of the Vipassanā Association of the Accountant General's Office. The association owns and operates the centre. There was also the late Sayagyi U Ba Pho, who was the Secretary, and today the other executive members carry on the work. Some were members of the Vipassanā Research Association founded by Sayagyi in 1952 and were

trained to teach meditation. This association had eleven members and Sayagyi was the President. All were told to teach meditation. But all of them were fully engaged in their duties in everyday life until recently, and they didn't come forward until their teachings were needed.

DAY THREE: EVENING DISCOURSE

The Importance of Restraining the Senses, Mahākāḷa and Cullakāḷa¹

Subhānupassiṃ viharantaṃ indriyesu asaṃvutaṃ
Bhojanamhi cāmattaññuṃ kusītaṃ hīnavīriyaṃ
Taṃ ve pasahati Māro vāto rukkhaṃ va dubbalaṃ.
Asubhānupassiṃ viharantaṃ indriyesu susaṃvutaṃ
Bhojanamhi ca mattaññuṃ saddhaṃ āraddhavīriyaṃ
Taṃ ve nappasahati Māro vāto selaṃ va pabbataṃ.

Just as the wind throws down a weak tree, similarly, Māra indeed overcomes one who lives looking for what is pleasant, who is unrestrained in his senses, immoderate in eating, indolent and devoid of energy.

Just as the wind cannot throw down a rocky mountain, similarly, Māra indeed cannot overcome one who lives looking for that which is not pleasing, who is restrained in his senses, moderate in eating, possessed of devotion and full of energy.

Dhammapada vv. 7, 8

These verses were given by the Buddha in connection with Cullakāḷa and Mahākāḷa. These two brothers, when travelling on business, saw disciples going to hear a discourse given by the Buddha. Mahākāḷa said to his younger brother, "Take care

¹See *Buddhist Legends*, I 184-189.

of the carts. I'll go and listen to the discourse." He went and sat at the extreme edge of the gathering.

The Buddha gave a discourse in gradual order suited to Mahākāla's mental disposition. He spoke in various ways of the dangers of sensual desires. It is said that when the Buddha gave a discourse, his voice was clear to all, no matter how far back they were seated, and that each person felt the talk was addressed to him personally.

Mahākāla was inspired by the talk and decided to become a bhikkhu. So he asked permission of his brother, who begged him not to ordain. But he couldn't dissuade him, so Mahākāla became a bhikkhu. Then Cullakāla decided to ordain as well, thinking he would be able to get his brother to leave the Order.

Later, Mahākāla received the higher ordination and asked the Buddha how many ways there were of practising the Dhamma. The Buddha explained that one could study the texts of the Teachings and one could practise insight meditation. So Mahākāla said, "Lord, I took orders in my old age and I won't be able to become accomplished in the study of the texts. I will practise insight meditation."

He was given one of the forty techniques especially appropriate for bhikkhus. He was to practise the ascetic practices in a cemetery. He would go to the cemetery after everyone had gone to sleep and come back each morning before anyone got up.

There was a woman named Kālī whose job was to cremate the dead bodies. She noticed that someone had been sitting and walking up and down at one spot in the cemetery. So she kept watch one night to find out who came. Seeing Mahākāla come in the middle of the night, she went to him and paid respects. "Sir," she told him, "those who reside in the cemetery should acquaint themselves with the rules." Venerable Mahākāla didn't answer, "Who am I to follow your rules?" for

he was a very humble person. “Devotee,” he asked instead, “what must I do?” She explained that he should inform the senior elder of the monastery, the head man of the village, and the keepers of the cemetery. Otherwise, if thieves should dump stolen goods in the cemetery and the people chasing the thieves should find the goods, there would be trouble for the bhikkhu. If it were known he was residing there, no one would suspect him of being a thief.

“What else am I expected to do?” Mahākāḷa asked. She told him to avoid fish, meat, flour, oil, molasses, and so on, for the smell of these foods might attract the hungry ghosts (*petas*). He shouldn’t sleep in the daytime or be lazy. He should be strenuous in his effort, shouldn’t have any fraudulent and deceitful motives; he should stay with good intentions, leave the monastery when all were asleep and go back before anyone was awake. And she said she would let him know when there was a dead body for him to observe to help him in his meditation, for that is part of the cemetery practice.

One day, a young woman died and was taken to be cremated. Kālī informed Mahākāḷa, who looked at the young woman who had just died and whose body still retained its golden complexion. He told Kālī to tell him when the body was on fire. And so he watched the disagreeable changes that occur as a body is cremated, and using this as his object, he developed insight and attained Arahatsip.

After he attained Arahatsip, he and his brother accompanied the Buddha when he went to their home town, Siṃsapā. The two wives of the younger brother, Cullakāḷa, invited the Buddha and bhikkhus for a meal. Now the Buddha sends ahead a bhikkhu to prepare seats when he goes to a place he hasn’t frequented before. A seat was prepared in the middle for the Buddha, to the right for Sāriputta and on the left for Moggallāna, and the seats for the other bhikkhus are prepared

on either side. Mahākāḷa sent his younger brother. The people in the house made fun of him and went out of their way to prepare the seats incorrectly. They prepared low seats on the side for the senior elders and high seats on the side for the junior elders. The women pretended not to hear when Cullakāḷa protested.

They pulled off his robes, dressed him in white, put a wreath of flowers on his head and sent him off, saying, “Go fetch the Teacher. We’ll prepare the seats.” Those who haven’t been a bhikkhu for a very long time or who leave the Order of Bhikkhus before a year is over have no sense of shame. So Cullakāḷa went dressed like that, without any fear of being ridiculed.

Mahākāḷa’s wives decided that there was no reason why they shouldn’t persuade their husband to become a layman as his brother had done. They asked for the Buddha to leave Mahākāḷa behind to express appreciation for the meal. The Buddha said, “Very well,” and went ahead.

When they arrived at the village gate, some of the bhikkhus began grumbling. “What has the teacher done? Did he do it consciously or unconsciously?” So we can see that even bhikkhus working directly with the Buddha had their doubts, and that they would sometimes concern themselves with things that weren’t their affair. This is a good example to remember when we think we know better than the teacher.

The Buddha asked the bhikkhus if they thought Mahākāḷa was like his brother Cullakāḷa. They answered, “Yes, Lord. Cullakāḷa has two wives. Mahākāḷa had eight wives. If they get hold of him, what will he be able to do?”

The Buddha explained to the bhikkhus that Cullakāḷa, after he meditated, indulged in thoughts of sensual pleasures whereas Mahākāḷa dwelt on thoughts of unpleasant objects. “He is immovable, like a solid mountain of rock,” the Buddha

told them. And he pronounced the verses given at the beginning of the story.

Just as the wind throws down a weak tree, similarly, Māra indeed overcomes one who lives looking for what is pleasant, who is unrestrained in his senses, immoderate in eating, indolent and devoid of energy.

Just as the wind cannot throw down a rocky mountain, similarly, Māra indeed cannot overcome one who lives looking for that which is not pleasing, who is restrained in his senses, moderate in eating, possessed of devotion and full of energy.

The former wives of Mahākāḷa surrounded him and said to him, “Who gave you permission to become a bhikkhu? Now you will become a layman again.” And they tried to pull off his robes. But Mahākāḷa rose in the air using his powers, broke through a corner of the house and went through the sky just as the Buddha was concluding the verses. And he came down and paid respects to the Teacher.

The Five Hindrances¹

This morning we discussed the five hindrances: (1) sensuous desire, (2) ill will, (3) sloth and torpor, (4) restlessness and worry, and (5) skeptical doubt. Let us go into a little more detail on how they arise and how we can overcome them.

¹This discussion of the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) is largely inspired by Nyanaponika Thera’s “The Five Mental Hindrances and Their Conquest,” *The Wheel* n° 26 (2nd revised and enlarged ed., 1961). For further discussion of the five hindrances, see *The Dispeller of Delusion, Part 1* (Sammohavinodanī), pp. 332-338.

1. Sensuous desire. The Buddha said, “There are beautiful objects. Frequently giving unwise attention to them is the nourishment for the arising of sense desire that hasn’t arisen and the nourishment for increasing and making stronger the sense desire that has already arisen.”¹ Ashin Buddhaghosa gives a list of six things that are helpful for abandoning sense desire:² (1) we should learn to meditate on impure objects; (2) we should devote ourselves to meditating on the impure; (3) we should guard the sense doors; (4) we should be moderate in eating; (5) we should cultivate noble friendship; (6) we should hold suitable conversation.

As we have seen in the story of Ven. Mahākāla, meditating on impure objects is a technique especially suitable for bhikkhus and consists of contemplating the loathsomeness of the body. This does not have to be an object as disagreeable as a body being cremated, however. Our own bodies in their normal state can be used. At the time of ordination, before shaving their heads, the preceptor teaches the aspirants who are to ordain as bhikkhus or *sāmaṇeras* to meditate on the first five of the constituent parts of the body as given in the Pāli texts, namely: the hair of the head, body hair, nails, teeth, and skin. The aspirant should reflect, “These are mere filth as regards colour, shape, smell, and location. These are not I, not mine, not a soul or a being, but are impermanent, a cause of suffering and not self (*anicca, dukkha, and anattā*).”

During the time of the Buddha, there were seven-year-old *sāmaṇeras* who reflected on the thirty-two constituent parts of the body while their heads were being shaved and became Arahats. Venerable Dabba Mallaputta became a Stream-Winner (*sotāpanna*) when the first lock of hair was shaved, a Once-

¹Samyutta-nikāya V 63 (*Kindred Sayings* V 52).

²Commentary on the Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta.

Returner (*sakadāgāmi*) with the second lock, a Non-Returner (*anāgāmi*) with the third lock, and an Arahāt with the fourth lock.¹ Venerable Saṅkicca was taken by a relative to Venerable Sāriputta when he was seven and asked to go forth as a *sāmaṇera*. The elder taught Saṅkicca the meditation on the five parts of the body, and the moment the razor touched his hair, he attained Arahātship.² Venerable Culla Sumana and a *sāmaṇera* who ordained under Elder Tissa of Kosambī also attained Arahātship when their heads were shaved.³

Guarding the sense doors will be very useful to us, both during a meditation course and in our daily lives. Venerable Sāriputta advised a fellow bhikkhu concerning control of the senses.⁴ He said that whenever you see an object, you shouldn't be misled by its overall form or by its details. This is necessary because if the faculty of the eye is uncontrolled, covetousness, grief, and states that are evil and unprofitable will overwhelm you. Therefore, you should apply yourselves to controlling the sense of sight; you should set a guard over your sense of sight in order to gain control of it. The same thing is true when you hear a sound, smell an odour, taste a savour, and when your body comes into contact with a tangible object. For each sense, you work on controlling it and on setting a guard over it. In that way you gain control.

The Buddha explained to Venerable Migajāla how this works.⁵ He said that there are visible objects that can be seen by the eye and that are desirable, lovely, pleasing, agreeable,

¹Mp I 274f., quoted in *Udāna Commentary* II, p. 1119, note 672.

²*Buddhist Legends* II, p. 239. Cf. Th-a II 255, where it is said he attained Arahātship in the tonsure hall.

³*Buddhist Legends* III 279, Dh-p-a II 182ff.

⁴Samyutta-nikāya IV 102 (*Kindred Sayings* IV 63).

⁵Samyutta-nikāya IV 36 (*Kindred Sayings* IV 16-18).

associated with desire, and that arouse lust. If we let ourselves be enamoured of such visible objects, if we welcome them and cling to them, then they will become a lure for us. When a lure is present, infatuation will be present. When there's infatuation, there will be bondage. In the same way, sounds, odours, tastes, and tangible objects can hold us as slaves. The Buddha said that being held in bondage to the senses is called "being a dweller with a mate," and the mate is craving. But if you can stop being enamoured of sense objects, if you don't delight in them, if you aren't attached to them, if you don't welcome them, then the lure fades away. With the lure gone, infatuation disappears. If there's no infatuation then there will be no bondage.

Moderation in eating should be easy for us to understand. We should follow the example of the Buddha's bhikkhus who eat only after carefully considering that the food they eat is only to maintain and sustain the body so that physical harm will be avoided and so that the life of purity (*brahma-cariya*) can be properly led. The bhikkhus think to themselves, "In this way I will get rid of old painful feeling, and I won't let a new painful feeling arise. I will have a long life that will be without blame, and I will enjoy well-being."

Noble friendship is especially important to us if we are to make progress in our meditation. At one time, Venerable Ānanda said to the Buddha that good friends, good companions, and being inclined to good friends was half of the life of purity.¹ "Don't say that, Ānanda," the Buddha replied. "Having a good friend, having good companions, and being inclined to good friends is the whole of the life of purity, not the half." He then explained that only if we have a good friend to teach us the Dhamma will we be able to follow the Noble

¹KS I 113f.; V 2f.

Eightfold Path. And the Buddha said, “It is because I am a good friend to them that living beings subject to birth are freed from birth.”

The Buddha gave a detailed explanation of what constitutes suitable conversation in a talk to Venerable Ānanda.¹ He says that a bhikkhu working correctly when following the Dhamma will avoid the wrong kinds of speech. Wrong speech includes: talk that is low, coarse, worldly, not noble, and isn’t connected with the goal. Wrong speech doesn’t encourage others to turn away and doesn’t lead to detachment, to freedom from passion, to cessation, to tranquillity, to higher knowledge, to Self-Awakening, or to Nibbāna. Examples of such wrong speech include talk about kings, thieves, ministers, armies, fears, battles, food, drink, clothes, beds, garlands, scents, relations, vehicles, villages, market towns, towns, the country, women, heroic men, gossip, ancestors, trifles, tales about the origin of the world and the ocean, talk of what did or didn’t happen.

The Buddha goes on in his talk to Ānanda and explains that there are other things to talk about—things that are appropriate for a bhikkhu. This is talk about the austere life, talk that helps to open up the mind and that leads to turning away, to detachment, to freedom from passion, to cessation, to tranquillity, to higher knowledge, to Self-Awakening, and to Nibbāna. This will be talk about wanting little, about being contented, about being aloof from society, about putting forth energy, about virtue, about concentration, about intuitive wisdom, about freedom, about knowledge and vision of deliverance.

¹Majjhima-nikāya n° 122 (*Middle Length Sayings* III 156f.).

2. Ill will. Now let us look at the second hindrance, ill will. In the Pāḷi canon,¹ ill will is said to be nourished by paying too much unwise attention to objects that cause aversion. If we dwell on them, they will cause ill will to arise, and once ill will is present in our minds, they will cause it to grow stronger. The way to cut off the nourishment of ill will is to frequently pay wise attention to loving kindness. If we dwell on thoughts of loving kindness, we will avoid the arising of ill will and we will cut off ill will that is already present.

Ashin Buddhaghosa pointed out how self-destructive ill will is.² If we bear in mind how harmful ill will is, that will help us eliminate it in ourselves. We should remember that being angry with someone else won't blemish that person's virtue or good qualities. In other words, our anger won't harm the person we are angry with as far as the important things are concerned. We should remember that we are where we are today because of the actions we did in the past. The actions we do now will determine what happens to us in the future. Therefore, being angry with someone else is like grabbing hold of hot, glowing coals or a heated rod of iron, or it's like picking up excrement. Whenever other people are angry with us, we should remember that the same things hold true for them; their wrong actions will fall back on their heads like an unaccepted gift or like a handful of dirt thrown against the wind.

3. Sloth and torpor. The third hindrance of sloth and torpor will be nourished if we give unwise attention to boredom, languor, stretching of the body, drowsiness after meals, and

¹Samyutta-nikāya (Nyanaponika's reference [46, 51] has not been identified yet).

²Commentary on the Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta.

mental sluggishness.¹ Dwelling too much on these will cause sloth and torpor to arise and will make them increase and grow stronger once they do arise. We can eliminate sloth and torpor by frequently giving wise attention to the element of arousing energy, to the element of making an effort, and to the element of continuous exertion. Practising these will prevent sloth and torpor from arising and get rid of them once they do.

The Buddha said that we shouldn't use three of the seven factors of Awakening to help overcome sloth and torpor.² We shouldn't work on developing tranquillity, concentration, or equanimity when the mind is sluggish. The Buddha pointed out that a man who wants to make a small fire blaze up wouldn't heap on wet grass, wet cowpats, and wet sticks; he wouldn't expose it to wind and rain and sprinkle dust on it. Similarly, we shouldn't develop mental faculties that serve to calm down the mind when it's sluggish.

On the other hand, we should cultivate the three factors of Awakening that will make it easy to arouse the mind. They are: investigation of Dhamma, energy, and rapture or joy. These will be effective, like a man who wants to make a small fire blaze up by piling on dry grass, dry cowpats, and dry sticks, then blowing on it gently and avoiding sprinkling it with dust. The seventh factor of Awakening is being mindful; it's always beneficial to develop mindfulness.³ We will be talking in greater detail about the seven factors of Awakening when we come to the training in insight.

4. Restlessness and worry. Frequently paying unwise attention to unrest in the mind is the nourishment for the arising of the fourth hindrance of restlessness and worry. This

¹Samyutta-nikāya V 103.

²Samyutta-nikāya V 113 (*Kindred Sayings* V 95f.).

³Samyutta-nikāya V 115 (*Kindred Sayings* V 98).

will make it increase and grow stronger.¹ We can eliminate restlessness and worry by frequently paying attention to a calm mind.² When our minds are restless or elated, we shouldn't cultivate three factors of Awakening: investigation of Dhamma, energy, and wisdom. That would be like trying to put out a great fire by heaping dry grass, dry cowpats, and dry sticks on it, and by blowing on it and not throwing on dirt. When our minds are restless or elated, we should cultivate three factors of Awakening: tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity. These will be like putting out a great fire by heaping on wet grass, wet cowpats, and wet sticks, by exposing it to wind and rain, and by throwing on dirt. As before with sloth and torpor, developing mindfulness will always be helpful.³

5. Doubt. Giving frequent unwise attention to matters that provoke uncertainty or doubt (*vicikicchathāniya*) will lead to the arising of the fifth hindrance: doubt. It will increase it and make it stronger.⁴ But if we frequently give wise attention to understanding profitable and unprofitable states, blameworthy and blameless states, states that should be cultivated and states that shouldn't be cultivated, low and high states, dark and bright states—then we will get rid of our doubts.⁵

¹Samyutta-nikāya V 103.

²Samyutta-nikāya V 106.

³Samyutta-nikāya V 114f. (*Kindred Sayings* V 97f.).

⁴Samyutta-nikāya V 103.

⁵Samyutta-nikāya V 106.

The Advantages of Abandoning the Five Hindrances

The Buddha spoke of the advantages that are gained when the five hindrances are abandoned:¹

[A bhikkhu who] possesses this noble morality, this noble restraint of the senses, and this noble contentment ... finds a solitary lodging, at the root of a forest tree, in a mountain cave or gorge, a charnel-ground, a jungle-thicket, or in the open air on a heap of straw. Then, having eaten after his return from the alms round, he sits down cross-legged, holding his body erect, and concentrates on keeping mindfulness established before him.

Abandoning worldly desires, he dwells with a mind freed from worldly desires, and his mind is purified of them. Abandoning ill will and hatred ... and by developing compassionate love for the welfare of all living beings, his mind is purified of ill will and hatred. Abandoning sloth and torpor ... perceiving light, mindful and clearly aware, his mind is purified of sloth and torpor. Abandoning restlessness and worry ... and with an inwardly calmed mind his heart is purified of restlessness and worry. Abandoning doubt, he dwells with doubt left behind, without uncertainty as to what things are wholesome, his mind is purified of doubt.

It is like a man who has taken a loan to develop his business; his business prospers and he is able to pay off his old debts. With what is left over, he can support a wife. Then he would think, "Before, I developed my business by borrowing. Now it has prospered ...," and he would rejoice and be glad about that.

It is like a man who is ill, suffering, terribly sick, with no appetite and weak in body. After a time, he might recover and

¹Based on the translation by Maurice Walshe, *Thus Have I Heard* (pp. 101f.; D I 71f.).

regain his appetite and bodily strength. He would think, “Before, I was ill [but now I am well] ...,” and he would rejoice and be glad about that.

It is like a man confined in a prison. After a while, he is released and he regains all of his possessions. He would think, “Before, I was in prison [but now I am free] ...,” and he would rejoice and be glad about that.

It is like a man who is a slave, who isn’t his own master but is dependent on someone else. He isn’t able to go where he wants. But after some time, he is freed from slavery and able to go anywhere he wants. He would think, “Before, I was a slave [but now I am free] ...,” and he would rejoice and be glad about that.

It is like a man loaded down with goods and wealth. He goes on a long journey through the desert. Food is scarce in the desert, and there’s danger everywhere. After a while, he comes to the other side of the desert and arrives safe and sound at the outskirts of a village. He would think, “Before, I was in danger, but now I am safe at the outskirts of a village,” and he would rejoice and be glad about that.

As long as a bhikkhu doesn’t perceive the disappearance of the five hindrances in himself, he feels as if he were in debt, sick, in prison, in slavery, or on a desert journey. But when he perceives the disappearance of the five hindrances in himself, it’s as if he were freed from debt, from sickness, from prison, from slavery, and from the perils of the desert.

And when he knows that these five hindrances have left him, gladness arises in him. From gladness comes delight. From the delight in his mind, his body is tranquillized. With a tranquil body, he feels joy, and with joy, his mind is concentrated. Being thus detached from sensual desire, detached from unwholesome states, he enters and remains in the first *jhāna*, which is associated with thinking and pondering, born

of detachment, filled with delight and joy. And with this delight and joy, born of detachment, he so suffuses, drenches, fills, and irradiates his body that there's no spot in his entire body that is untouched by this delight and joy born of detachment. [And he goes on to develop the other *jhānas* as well.]

Developing the *Jhāna* Factors

In his discourse, the Buddha explained how getting rid of the five hindrances make it possible for a bhikkhu to develop the absorption states (*jhānas*). As laypeople, we are not working for such states. Indeed, they could be a distraction that would sidetrack us from working towards our main goal of liberation. On the other hand, we must develop the five factors leading to those states. Ashin Buddhaghosa¹ says that once the hindrances have been suppressed, the meditator can begin to develop the factors of initial application, sustained application, zest, joy, and one-pointedness (*vitakka*, *vicāra*, *pīti*, *sukha*, *ekagattā*).² Developing these can lead both to access concentration (*upacāra*) and to absorption concentration (*appanā*).³ We are working here for access concentration. If we can attain that stage, we will abandon the hindrances and be able to continue to the next stage, which is insight meditation (*Vipassanā*).

In the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, the term *jhāna* is used to designate factors that are present in all mental states. So we are constantly using *jhāna* factors all the time. In ordinary mental activity, however, two additional factors can be present: dis-

¹*Path of Purification*, Chap. III, ¶ 21.

²We use the translations for these terms adopted by Bhikkhu Bodhi in the revised edition of Mahāthera Nārada's translation of the Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha (*A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, BPS, 1993, p. 52).

³*Path of Purification*, Chap. IV, ¶¶ 32f.

pleasure (*domanassa*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*).¹ As Venerable Ledi Sayadaw says, “No deed, such as giving charity or taking life, can be executed by a feeble mind lacking the necessary constituents of *jhāna*. It is the same with all moral and immoral deeds.”² He explains that initial application reviews the object being observed over and over. It fixes the mind firmly on the object. Initial application is also called aspiration (*sāṅkappa*), and that can be a right aspiration or a wrong aspiration. Sustained application reviews the object over and over, and it attaches the mind to the object. Zest creates interest in the object and makes the mind happy and content with it. It means pleasurable interest of the mind or buoyancy of the mind. The three types of feeling (*vedanā*)—joy, displeasure, and equanimity—make the mind experience the desirable, undesirable, or neutral aspects of the object. One-pointedness has the characteristic of concentration. It keeps the mind steadfastly fixed on the object.

The *Piṭaka-Disclosure*³ explains that initial application is when we first notice an object. Sustained application is exploring the object. It is like seeing someone in the distance without being able to tell if it is a man or a woman. When the person comes closer and it is obvious whether it is a man or a woman, then it is possible to investigate further: Is the person virtuous or unvirtuous? Rich or poor? With initial application we fix the mind on the object. With sustained application we go around the object and explore it. Initial application is like a bird picking up speed when it flies. Sustained application is like the bird gliding in flight. When we are developing right thought in this way, bodily and mental pain will not arise. We will rather

¹A *Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, p. 272.

²*The Manuals of Buddhism*, p. 56. The following is from the same page and p. 11.

³Pages 189–191.

will rather find that mental pleasure—zest—and physical pleasure—joy—will arise. They are all unified by concentration or one-pointedness.

While we are working on mindfulness of breathing, we will be developing these factors of initial application in the form of right aspiration, sustained application, zest, joy, and one-pointedness. Displeasure is a factor in unwholesome mental states, so that is something we will be working to avoid. Equanimity is a quality that we will develop in a positive manner when we come to insight meditation.

The five *jhāna* factors that we are working on now will directly combat the five hindrances.¹ According to *The Path of Purification*, “One-pointedness is incompatible with sensuous desire; joy is incompatible with ill will; initial application is incompatible with sloth and torpor; zest is incompatible with restlessness and worry; and sustained application is incompatible with doubt.”² We can see, then, that these five *jhāna* factors are the opposites of the five hindrances. Even though we do not develop them to the highest degree, all the effort we make to cultivate these factors will be of great benefit to us now as we strive to concentrate our minds, and the more progress we make at this first stage, the better we will be able to develop insight later on.

¹*Path of Purification*, Chap. IV 86;

²Chap. IV, ¶ 86. Ashin Buddhaghosa quotes the *Peṭakopadesa* as his source, but this passage is not in that text as we now have it.

DAY FOUR: MORNING

*Uṭṭhānen' appamādena samyamena damena ca
Dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī yaṃ ogho n' ābhikīrati.*

Through energy, vigilance, restraint, and self-control, the intelligent person should make himself an island that is not overwhelmed by the flood.

Dhammapada v. 25

The Story of Cūlapanthaka¹

We have mentioned several times that our ability to work and the speed of our progress depends on how much preparation we have made. I've told you stories of meditators who were able to make progress very quickly. Now let me tell you the story of a dullard. Even a person who is slow to learn, if he works properly, can practise the Teachings and arrive at the goal.

The verse we began with was given in reference to the Elder Cūlapanthaka. In Rājagaha there was a rich merchant who had a daughter. When she grew up, he built a seven-storey building to keep her in and had her closely watched. But she was attracted to her slave and, afraid that their relationship would be found out, she said, "It's impossible for us to live here. If my parents find out, they'll cut me into pieces. We must go and live somewhere else." So they went away.

She became pregnant and when the birth was near, she told her husband, "My time is near and giving birth without

¹*Buddhist Stories*, I 299-310; *The Dhammapada Commentary*, I 95-100.

any friends or relatives to help would be courting trouble. Let's go to my parents' house." But the slave feared for his life and kept putting her off.

She thought to herself, "Because of the seriousness of what he has done, this fool doesn't dare go. But actually parents care for their children's welfare. I'll go whether he comes or not." So she left. When the husband came home and found she had left, he went after her. He caught up with her and she gave birth at the place where he overtook her. There was no point in continuing to her parents' house, so they went back. And they called the boy *Panthaka*, meaning "on the road." And the same thing happened again soon after. So they added "big" to the older boy's name (*Mahā*) and called the second boy "little on the road" (*Cūla-panthaka*).

The oldest boy heard his friends talking about their uncles and grandparents when he played with them so he asked his mother if they were without relatives in the village. "Yes," his mother said, "you have no relatives here. But in *Rājagaha* your grandfather is a rich merchant and we have many relatives." So the boy wanted to go there. The mother didn't tell her son why she had left home. Finally both boys pestered their mother so much she said to her husband, "These boys are pestering me to death. After all, my parents won't eat us alive when they see us. Let's take the children to see their grandparents."

"I can't face them," the husband replied, "but I'll take you there." So they took the boys and stopped in a rest house at the city gates of *Rājagaha*. The mother sent a message to her parents. Their reaction was, "In the rounds of rebirth there's no one who hasn't been a son or a daughter, but our daughter and this slave have greatly offended us. It is impossible for us to see them. Let's give them enough to live on and let them go

live where they please. They can send the boys to us, however.” So the boys went to live with their grandparents.

Mahāpanthaka was old enough to go with his grandfather to hear the Buddha’s discourses, but Cūlapanthaka was too young. Mahāpanthaka, through hearing the Buddha regularly, developed an inclination to become a bhikkhu and he asked permission of his grandfather. His grandfather was delighted, “I would rather *you* become a bhikkhu than anyone else in the world,” he said. “If you can become a bhikkhu, do so.” You see, it’s very meritorious to help someone become a bhikkhu. If we become a bhikkhu or help someone else to do so, then we will be able to ordain in a later life.

So Mahāpanthaka became a novice. His preceptor gave him one of the forty techniques of meditation, the one which involves contemplating the hair, body hair, nails, teeth, and skin. This type of meditation is especially appropriate for bhikkhus. And Mahāpanthaka mastered many teachings of the Buddha and when he was old enough, he took the full ordination as a bhikkhu.

So he lived with the bliss of the Fruition States, and it occurred to him, “Wouldn’t it be possible to give this bliss to Cūlapanthaka?” He went to his grandfather and asked permission to admit Cūlapanthaka to the Order of Bhikkhus. Permission was given. One reason the banker gave permission so readily was that he was a well-known lay disciple of the Buddha, and when people asked who the mother of his grandchildren was, he was ashamed to explain about his daughter’s immoral act.

Cūlapanthaka was established in the practice of the moral rules, but it was soon obvious that he was slow in his spiritual progress. He was given a stanza with only four lines:

Behold the Buddha in resplendent glory, like the fragrant red lotus blossoming in the morning, and the shining sun in the sky.

But he couldn't learn even four lines.

There was a reason for this, of course. During the time of Buddha Kassapa, Buddha Gotama's predecessor, he had been a bhikkhu. During that life, he had been very intelligent, and he had made fun of a bhikkhu who was slow to learn. The bhikkhu was embarrassed because of his mockery and refused to learn his lessons. So this is why Cūlapanthaka was born a dullard. When he tried to learn more, he forgot what he had already learned.

Four months passed and he hadn't learned even one verse. So Mahāpanthaka went to him and said, "You aren't worthy of remaining in the Order. How can you reach the goal of the bhikkhu's life if you can't learn four lines? You should leave." But Cūlapanthaka never aspired to lead the life of a layman. He was very attached to the Buddha's Teachings.

Now at that time, a layman named Jivaka, a physician and the foster child of a prince, invited the Buddha and the five hundred bhikkhus residing with him to come for a meal. Mahāpanthaka was in charge of arranging for such invitations. He accepted, saying, "There is one bhikkhu, Cūlapanthaka, who is of little intelligence, who isn't advancing in the Dhamma. I accept the invitation for all except him."

When Cūlapanthaka heard this, he thought to himself, "The Elder must be disappointed with me. What is the use of remaining in the Order of Bhikkhus. I would do better to become a layman again and live giving charity and doing other meritorious deeds." And the next day, early in the morning, he set out to give up his robes. The Buddha would always survey the world in the morning to see who was ready to benefit from

his Teachings, and he realized what was happening. He went ahead and was walking in front of the door Cūlapanthaka would go through to leave. Seeing the Buddha, Cūlapanthaka paid respects.

The Buddha asked him, “Where are you going at this time of day?” And Cūlapanthaka answered, “Lord, my brother has sent me away. I am leaving the Order.” The Buddha then asked, “Your admission in the Order is my concern. Why didn’t you come to me when your brother sent you away? What good can there be in returning to life as a layman? Come, stay with me.” So saying, the Teacher, stroking him on the head with his palm marked with auspicious marks, took him away and made him sit down in front of the Perfumed Chamber (*Gandhakuṭī*). Then he gave him a clean piece of cloth produced by his supernormal power and said to him, “Cūlapanthaka, stay here facing east and rub this piece of cloth while reciting the words, ‘Taking on the impurity’ (*rajoharaṇam*) over and over.”

As Cūlapanthaka rubbed the cloth, repeating the words “Taking on the impurity,” it became soiled. And he thought, “This cloth was very clean, but because of me it has changed and become soiled.” The Buddha, who had gone to Jīvaka’s home for the meal, realized that Cūlapanthaka had set his mind on insight, reflecting that conditioned things are impermanent. So he sent forth an image of himself and said to Cūlapanthaka, “It isn’t only the piece of cloth that is soiled and made dirty by dust. Within you there exists the dust of desire, hatred, and ignorance. Remove them.” And he repeated this in a verse:

Desire (*rāga*) is called dust (*raja*). It doesn’t mean dust. It means passion. Having abandoned this dust of passion, the bhikkhu abides in the Teachings of the One who is free of passion.

Hatred (*dosa*) is called dust. It doesn't mean dust. It means ill will. Having abandoned this dust of ill will, the bhikkhu abides in the Teachings of the One who is free of hatred.

Ignorance (*moha*) is called dust. It doesn't mean dust. It means delusion. Having abandoned this dust of delusion, the bhikkhu abides in the Teachings of the One who is free of delusion.

At the end of the verses, Cūlapanthaka attained Arahantship together with analytical knowledge, and with that, he came to understand the implication of all the Teachings (the Tipiṭaka).

In a former life, Cūlapanthaka had been a king, and in going around the city, he wiped his forehead with a clean piece of cloth and it was soiled. He realized, "This cloth which was clean has changed because of my body." And he developed the idea of impermanence, thinking, "Unstable indeed are conditioned things." This past deed was the supporting factor in his making progress.

When Jīvaka brought water to pour as a symbol of donation to the Buddha, the Teacher asked him, "Are there still bhikkhus at the monastery?" When Jīvaka replied that Mahāpanthaka had said there were none left behind, the Buddha told him that there were. So Jīvaka sent someone to see.

Cūlapanthaka realized what his brother had said and so he created a thousand bhikkhus and filled the mango grove with them—some mending robes, others dyeing them, others studying, etc. The man sent by Jīvaka returned and said, "The mango grove is full of bhikkhus." The Buddha said, "Go to the monastery and say that the Teacher summons the bhikkhu named Cūlapanthaka to come." But the man came back saying that voices had come from all thousand bhikkhus declaring, "I

am Cūlapanthaka, I am Cūlapanthaka.” So the Buddha said, “Go get hold of the first bhikkhu to say he is Cūlapanthaka. The others will disappear.” And this proved to be true. So Cūlapanthaka joined the others.

After the meal, the Buddha told Jivaka that Cūlapanthaka would give the discourse usual after such an occasion, and he delivered a discourse that covered all the Teachings—the three Piṭakas.

That evening, a group of bhikkhus were discussing what had happened. The Buddha went to them and sat on the seat prepared for him. He looked at the assembly with a heart full of tenderness and loving kindness and thought, “The conduct of this assembly is so pleasant that there’s no movement of hands or feet, no coughing or sneezing. They are so full of respect for the Buddha and awed by his glory that if I should sit for the rest of my life without speaking, they would not break the silence and speak first. I will initiate the talk.” And he asked the bhikkhus the subject of their conversation. They told him, and the Buddha said that this wasn’t the first time he had been a refuge to Cūlapanthaka.

In a former life, there was a young man who went to Takkaṣilā, the city renowned for its teachers, to study. Out of five hundred pupils, he gave the greatest service to the teacher, Cūlasetṭhi, doing everything, beginning with massaging his feet. But he was so slow in learning, he couldn’t remember any of the Teachings. He lived there a long time but couldn’t learn even one verse. He was discouraged and asked permission to leave. The teacher wanted to reward him for his services, and so he decided to teach him a charm. He took him to the forest and taught him a phrase, repeating it hundreds of times, “You are transgressing; why do you do so? I am aware of it.” When the young man learned the charm, the teacher sent him away.

So he returned to Bārāṇasi, his native town. Now one day, the king of Bārāṇasi decided to go about incognito to see if he could learn of any wrong deeds he may have done which he was unaware of, thinking, "One doesn't see one's own faults, but others do." He knew that the people discussed all sorts of topics when eating in the evening, so if he was ruling his kingdom unrighteously, they would say that they were being oppressed by penalties and taxes. Otherwise, they would praise the king.

There happened to be two thieves boring a tunnel between two houses in order to steal and the king saw them. He stopped in the shadow of the house to watch. The house they were trying to get into was the place where the young student who had come back from Takkaṣilā was sleeping. The thieves got in, and the young man woke up and decided to recite the charm: "Why are you transgressing? I know what you are doing." The thieves, thinking they were discovered, fled.

The next day, the king sent for the young man and asked him to teach him the charm he had heard the night before. So the young man said, "Very well, your majesty. You should sit on a seat on the same level with me and learn it." So the young man taught the king the charm and the king gave him a thousand coins as a teacher's fee.

Later, one of the king's generals paid the royal barber a thousand coins and told him to cut the king's throat while he was shaving him. The barber agreed. When the time came for the king to be shaved, the barber soaped the beard with scented water and sharpened the razor. Then he held the forehead of the king back to shave him, but found the razor wasn't sharp enough for what he was planning to do. So he began to sharpen it again.

At that moment, the king remembered about the charm and decided to recite it: "You are transgressing. Why are you

transgressing? I know what you are doing.” Sweat started pouring off the barber, who thought that the king was aware of what he was going to do, and, frightened, he dropped the razor and fell at the king’s feet. Kings are quick witted, so the king said, “Hey, you wicked barber. You thought the king didn’t know?” The barber asked for pardon. “Let it be,” the king answered. “Just tell me what it was.” On being told, the king realized he owed his life to the young man, his teacher. He banished the general from the kingdom and sent for the young man and made him the new general.

Thus, the Buddha said the present life wasn’t the only time he had been Cūlapanthaka’s refuge, for in that past life, Cūlapanthaka was the young man and the Bodhisatta (Buddha-to-be) was Cūlaseṭṭhi, the teacher who gave him the charm. And he gave the following verse:

A wise and discerning man can elevate his position
using only a little capital, just as one can fan a small fire
into a big blaze.

On another occasion, the bhikkhus were discussing what had happened to Cūlapanthaka, and the Buddha gave the verse we began with:

Through energy, vigilance, restraint and self-control,
the intelligent person should make himself an island that
is not overwhelmed by the flood.

Energy means putting forth effort (*viriya*); vigilance means being constantly mindful; restraint means leading a moral life; self-control means controlling the senses. A man who possesses these four faculties will be able to make himself an island—in other words, become an Arahāt—and none of the four floods of sensuous desires, desire for future lives, wrong beliefs, and ignorance, will be able to overwhelm him.

Tranquillity of Mind

We have mentioned before that when the mind settles down and becomes firm and tranquil, this tranquillity of mind causes certain mental objects to appear. These objects are able to arise because the mind has reached temporary purity. They will arise without fail, sooner or later, depending on the perfections (*pāramīs*) of the individual and on whether that person's efforts are balanced or not. In the *Visuddhimagga*, Ashin Buddhaghosa describes how we should work.

Your mind doesn't want to remain on awareness of the breath. It runs off the track like a chariot harnessed to a wild ox. Now suppose a cowherd wanted to tame a wild calf that had been reared on a wild cow's milk; he would take the calf away from the cow to be on its own and tie it up with a rope attached to a stout post stuck in the ground. The calf might dash around, but once it realized it couldn't get away, it would finally settle down by the post.

In the same way, if you wish to tame your mind, which is used to being fed on the food and drink of the various senses of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and ideas, then you should separate your mind from those sense objects. With this aid in your meditation, you can then tie your mind up to the post of the in-breaths and out-breaths with the rope of mindfulness. Your mind may dash around when it is deprived of the objects of attention it has been used to in the past, but with a firm rope of mindfulness, it will settle down to the object of meditation, and the influence of access concentration and absorption in the object will come to your aid.

As the early teachers in the Saṅgha said:

Just as a man who tames a calf will tie it to a post, so too here should his own mind be firmly tied to the object by mindfulness.

Ashin Buddhaghosa says that when a meditator is working properly, the sign will appear.¹ He explains that the sign isn't the same for everyone. For some people it produces a light touch like the brush of cotton or silk-cotton or like a light breeze. Ashin Buddhaghosa points out that in the commentaries he used, the sign is said to appear to some people in a form like a star, or like a cluster of gems, or like a cluster of pearls.² Other people feel a rough touch like the seeds from silk-cotton or a peg of wood made from heartwood. Some people experience the sign as being similar to a long braid of string, or a wreath of flowers, or a puff of smoke. Still others see something resembling a cobweb stretching out, or a film of cloud, or a lotus flower, or a chariot wheel, or the moon's disk, or the sun's disk. If one of the signs of light appears, we shouldn't start thinking about it or give it our direct attention.

Ashin Buddhaghosa explained that the different types of signs are like a number of bhikkhus sitting together reciting one of the Buddha's discourses. When one bhikkhu asks, "What do you think this discourse resembles?", another bhikkhu will say, "I think it resembles a great mountain torrent." Some other bhikkhu will say, "To me, it's like a line of forest trees." Still another bhikkhu will say, "To me, it's like a spreading fruit tree giving cool shade." The same discourse will seem different to them because they have different perceptions of it. The signs will also appear differently to different people because their perceptions are different.³ The sign "is born of perception," Ashin Buddhaghosa said, "its source is perception, it is produced by perception. Therefore, it

¹*Path*, Chapter VIII ¶ 214.

²*Op. cit.*, Chapter VIII ¶ 215.

³*Op. cit.*, Chapter VIII ¶ 216.

should be understood that when it appears differently it is because of difference of perception.”

There is one consciousness that has the in-breath as its object. Another consciousness has the out-breath as its object. Still another consciousness has the sign as its object. A mediator who doesn't perceive all three of these clearly can't reach an absorption state or even access. Reaching access and an absorption state is possible when all three are clear. And Ashin Buddhaghosa quotes the following poem:

Sign, in-breath, out-breath—[these] are not the object
Of a single consciousness;
Development is not obtained
By one who does not know these three things.

Sign, in-breath, out-breath—[these] are not the object
Of a single consciousness;
Development is obtained
By one who knows these three things.

Advice From Venerable Webu Sayadaw¹

At times, when we find it difficult to control the mind, many doubts may come into our minds. We may think that this meditation doesn't benefit us or that we are not able to do it properly. Venerable Webu Sayadaw, in one of his discourses, gave the following encouragement to his disciples:

You have taken up moral conduct (*sīla*). Now that you have undertaken to perfect yourselves in the Perfection of Morality (*sīla-pāramī*), fulfil it to the utmost. Only if you

¹From *Selected Discourses of Webu Sayadaw*, Dhamma Texts Series 3, pp. 59–61.

fulfil *sīla* to the utmost will all your aspirations be met. You will be happy now and in the future.

Only the teachings of the Buddha can give you real happiness—in the present and in the remainder of continued existence (*samsāra*). The teachings of the Buddha are enshrined in the Three Collections of the canon (Tipiṭaka). The Tipiṭaka are very extensive. If we take the essence out of the Tipiṭaka, we shall find the thirty-seven Factors of Awakening (*Bodhipakkhiyā-dhammā*). The essence of the thirty-seven Factors of Awakening is the eight constituents of the Noble Eightfold Path (*maggāṅgas*). The essence of the Noble Eightfold Path is the threefold training (*sikkhā*): higher morality, higher mindfulness, and higher wisdom (*adhisīla*, *adhicitta*, and *adhipaññā*). The essence of the threefold training is the unique Universal Law (*Eko Dhammo*).

If your body and mind are under control, as they are now, there can be no roughness of physical or verbal action. This is *adhisīla* or Perfect Morality.

If *adhisīla* becomes strong, the mind will become peaceful and tranquil and lose its harshness. This is called *adhicitta*.

If *adhicitta* (*samādhi*) becomes strong and the mind stays one-pointed for a long period, then you will realize that in a split second matter arises and dissolves billions and billions of times. If mind (*nāma*) knows matter (*rūpa*), it knows that matter becomes and disintegrates billions and

billions of times in the wink of an eye. This knowledge of arising and disintegration is called *adhipaññā*.

Whenever we breathe in or out, the in-coming and the out-going air touches somewhere in or near the nostrils. The sensitive matter (*kāyapasāda*)¹ registers the touch of air. In this process, the entities touching are matter and the entity knowing the touch is mind. So don't go around asking others about mind and matter; observe your breathing and you will find out about them for yourselves.

When the air comes in, it will touch. When the air goes out, it will touch. If you know this touch continuously, then wanting (*lobha*), dislike (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) don't have the opportunity to arise and the fires of greed, anger, and delusion will subside.

You cannot know the touch of air before it actually occurs. After it has gone, you cannot know it any more. Only while the air moves in or out can you feel the sensation of touch. This we call the present moment.

While we feel the touch of air, we know that there are only mind and matter. We know for ourselves that there is no "I," no other person, no man and woman, and we realize for ourselves that what the Buddha said is indeed true. We needn't ask others. While we know in-breath and out-breath, there is no "I" or *attā*.

¹*Kāyapasāda* is the sensitive matter contained in the six sense organs that registers touch, light (sight), sound waves, smells, tastes, and thoughts.

When we know this, our view is pure; it's right view. We know in that moment that there is nothing but *nāma* and *rūpa*, mind and matter. We also know that mind and matter are two different entities. If we thus know to distinguish between *nāma* and *rūpa*, we have attained to the ability to distinguish between mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*).

If we know the touch of air as and when it occurs, our mind is pure and we get the benefits thereof. Don't think that the benefits you get thus, even in a split second, are few. Don't think that those who meditate don't get any advantages from their practice. Now that you are born in a happy plane and encounter the teachings of a Buddha, you can obtain great benefits. Don't worry about eating and drinking, but make all the effort you can.

DAY FOUR: EVENING

The Heedful Illumine the World

Yo ca pubbe pamajjitvā pacchā so nappamajjati
So 'maṃ lokam pabhāseti abbhā mutto va candimā.

Whoever was heedless before and afterwards is not:
Such a one illumines this world like the moon freed
from clouds.

Dhammapada v. 172

This stanza was given by the Buddha when he was residing at Jetavana, with reference to Elder Sammuñjani.¹ This elder went about sweeping continually, both in the morning and in the afternoon. One day, he took his broom where Elder Revata spent the day and found him sitting. He thought to himself, “This idler enjoys the pious offerings of the faithful and then returns and sits in his cell. Why shouldn’t he sweep at least one room?”

Meanwhile, Elder Revata thought to himself, “I will give this bhikkhu an admonition.” So he said to Elder Sammuñjani, “Come here, brother. Go bathe and then return to me.” Elder Sammuñjani did as he was told. Then Elder Revata admonished him, saying, “Brother, a bhikkhu shouldn’t go about sweeping all the time.” And he explained what he should do, not only sweeping. When the time came to collect alms food, he should go forth for alms food and, on returning, meditate. He could, however, sweep once in the morning and once in

¹*Buddhist Legends*, III, pp. 5-6.

the evening. As Elder Sammuñjaṇī adhered scrupulously to the admonition of Elder Revata, he attained Arahatship in a very short time.

After that, all the rooms remained full of rubbish. So the bhikkhus asked him why he didn't sweep them any more. He replied that previously he was heedless but now he had become heedful. The bhikkhus reported the matter to the Buddha who pronounced the stanza with which we began.

There were many such persons in Myanmar when Sayagyi U Ba Khin was teaching. I shall give you some stories of outstanding persons, such as high officials of Myanmar. These persons illustrate the statement, "The heedful illumine the world."

The Advantages of Ānāpāna

I have explained that in Ānāpāna the advantage of using the breath as the object of concentration is that the breath is always with us. The only times we don't breathe are when we are still an unborn child, if we are drowning, or if we are already dead. There are other cases when no breath exists: if you are in an unconscious existence, reborn in the fine-material or immaterial planes, if you are in the fourth *jhānic* state or if you have attained the cessation state. But all of us here are breathing.

A retired high government official of Myanmar thought that he had stopped breathing when he began meditating. But when he told Sayamagyi that his breathing had stopped, even when he got up to leave his cell, she explained that it hadn't ceased; it had only become very subtle. It was only after he had made further progress that he understood that he had been

breathing after all. The reason we can have the impression we aren't breathing is that the breath is subtle and our understanding is too dull to be aware of it. So we must strive to develop our ability to be aware of the breath.

If we work correctly the rewards can be very great. As Sayagyi U Ba Khin said, "Only those who take to meditation with good intentions can be assured of success. With the development of the purity and the power of the mind backed by insight into the ultimate truth of nature, one might be able to do a lot of things in the right direction for the benefit of mankind. It is a common belief that a man whose power of concentration is good and who can secure perfect balance of mind at will can achieve better results than a person who isn't so developed.

"There are, therefore, definitely many advantages that accrue to a person who undergoes a successful course of training in meditation, whether he be a religious man, an administrator, a politician, a businessman, or a student."¹

The government official mentioned earlier came to the centre after his term of office was over in order to meditate. He was still in an important position and came with many bodyguards, who were armed. He had been educated in the West and, unfortunately for him, he had picked up the bad habit of drinking alcohol. It got to the point where he no longer drank water, only intoxicants. Working under Sayagyi's and Sayamagyi's guidance he was able to go into deep meditation at will for an hour and a half. And he said that once

¹"The Real Values of True Buddhist Meditation," in *Dhamma Texts*, 1985, The Sayagyi U Ba Khin Trust.

he got established in the Dhamma it was impossible for him to drink intoxicants again. “This is true *sīla*,” he said. It was no longer a matter of having to strain in order to restrain himself. It was he who gave the title “Sayama” which Sayagyi approved. Later, she became known as Sayamagyi.

There was also a justice from the High Court who was so fat he had trouble sitting down. But once he started *Ānāpāna* he was able to sit, and with Sayagyi’s and Sayamagyi’s help he was able to go into deep meditation as he wished. Another man who was a Pāli scholar was helped by Sayagyi and Sayamagyi to go into deep meditation at will. He told us that some of his difficult reports for the government took him months to write before he meditated. After developing his concentration he could finish them in a few day’s time. He was the person who addressed Sayamagyi as Mother Sayama. An income tax official came suffering from severe asthma. He wasn’t even able to walk up the flight of stairs leading to the pagoda at the centre. But he too attained the state like those mentioned above and found that his asthma was greatly relieved.

They all found that meditation helped them not only in their spiritual attainments, but also in their efficiency in discharging their respective responsible duties as civil servants.

Dr E. K. Nottingham, in her paper on “Buddhist Meditation in Burma” asked, “May [meditation] not possibly help to create a reservoir of calm and balanced energy to be used for the building of a ‘welfare state’ and as a bulwark against corruption in public life?” To this question, in view of the successes of the above-mentioned high ranking civil servants’ contribution in their respective jobs, we would say yes.

It was very easy to give you instructions for doing Ānāpāna. In a few minutes the technique is explained. But the practice is very difficult. Strong mindfulness and good understanding are needed.

In *The Path of Purification*,¹ Ashin Buddhaghosa says that the meditator should follow the example of the ploughman. After ploughing with his oxen, he sets them free to graze while he rests in the shade. The oxen may wander off. If he is skilful and intelligent, the ploughman won't wander through the forest looking for them, following their tracks. Instead, he will take his rope and his goad and go straight to their watering place where the oxen go for a drink and bath. And when he sees them there, he secures them with the rope and prods them on with the goad. In this way he can bring them back, yoke them to the plough, and continue his work.

For the meditator, mindfulness is like the rope and understanding is the goad. He will look for his in-breaths and out-breaths below the nose, above the upper lip, where they normally touch. In this way he has no difficulty in finding them, just as the skilful ploughman was sure to find his oxen at their watering place. He can make the breath secure with the rope of mindfulness and he can yoke them in that spot by prodding them with the goad of understanding.

If the meditator works in the right way the sign will soon appear. As I told you earlier, the sign varies from person to person, but one thing is common to all signs of a purified mind: the signs of purification are white as opposed to black.

¹Chapter VIII, ¶ 219.

We must go on giving attention, again and again. Buddha-ghosa said, quoting the Ancients:

Fixing his mind upon the sign
And putting away everything extraneous
The intelligent man anchors his mind
On the in-breaths and the out-breaths.

The Path of Purification, Ch. VIII, ¶ 219

If we can develop this concentration, it will be of great benefit not only to us, but also to all the world.

You will remember I said that we need to have worked for a long time on the ten perfections before we can encounter the Buddha's Teachings, and that the work we have done in the past will determine how fast our progress is. Even during the Buddha's time there were many who didn't become awakened. But there were some who attained Awakening very quickly. This was the case for the two chief disciples.

The Two Chief Disciples¹

There were two friends named Upatissa and Kolita. They were both very rich. One night while they were watching a theatrical performance, they saw a death scene at the end of a play. As they weren't accustomed to such realities in their day-to-day lives, they were deeply affected by it. They realized very deeply that one day they too would have to die. So they said to one another, "If there's this phenomenon of death, there must also be a phenomenon of deathlessness." And they resolved to attain it. They abandoned their wealth and went in

¹See *The Book of the Discipline*, IV, pp. 52-56; *Buddhist Legends*, I, pp. 198-204; and *The Gradual Sayings*, IV, pp. 50-54.

search of learned teachers. At Rājagaha, modern-day Rajgiri, they met the teacher Sañjaya and became his students. Sañjaya was one of the six best known teachers before the Buddha's Awakening. He had developed to such a high degree that by merely looking at a single bone of a dead man he could tell where he had been reborn. But he didn't have the knowledge of suffering, change, and lack of a permanent self (*dukkha*, *anicca*, and *anattā*).

The two friends studied under his guidance and learned his teachings in no time, but they found that Sañjaya couldn't teach the Deathless, so they decided to look for a better teacher. One day, Upatissa, who was later known as Sāriputta, met Assaji, the youngest of the five ascetics who were the first people taught by the Buddha. The Arahāt Assaji recited one stanza of the Buddha's Teachings and half way through the stanza, after only two lines, Sāriputta became established in the fruition state of the first stage of Awakening. He became a Sotāpanna. The stanza Assaji gave was this:

*Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesam hetum Tathāgato āha
Tesaṃ ca yo nirodho evaṃ vādi mahāsamaṇo.*

The Perfect One has explained the cause
Of all conditioned phenomena,
And that which is their cessation—
Thus is the teaching of the Great Recluse.

Sāriputta then went to see his friend and told him about his meeting with Assaji. He told him about the serenity, gentleness, and equanimity that pervaded Assaji and about his teacher Buddha Gotama. He repeated the stanza and Kolita, later known as Mahā-Moggallāna, became a Sotāpanna too.

They went to see the Buddha and ordained as bhikkhus and began their meditation. As soon as the Buddha saw them coming he could tell that they were to be his two chief disciples. And the Buddha said to the bhikkhus around him, "Here come two friends, Kolita and Upatissa. These two will be my chief disciples. They are an auspicious pair." Some of the bhikkhus had been very important in lay life and they disapproved, but the Buddha explained that the two friends had worked hard during countless lives to attain their status, and he recounted some of their past lives to illustrate this. "Bhikkhus, this is what they aspired to," the Buddha said. "I don't act with partiality."

So you can see that it's a waste of time and energy to be envious or jealous of others who make good progress. In the Dhamma there can be no favouritism. We earn whatever we achieve.

Sāriputta and Moggallāna told the Buddha the story of their present life and explained that after becoming Sotāpannas they went back to their teacher Sañjaya. "We wanted to lead him to you," they said, "and we told him of the hollowness of his practice and spoke to him of the advantages of coming here. But he said, 'For me to become a pupil now would be like a jar turning into a cup. It isn't possible for me to live like a pupil.' " When they pointed out that many people were turning to the Buddha and asked what would become of him, Sañjaya asked them, "Are there more wise men or more dullards in this world?" "Sir, there are many dullards in this world, but wise men are few," was the answer. "Well," Sañjaya said, "the wise will go to the wise man Gotama and the

dullards will come to a dullard like me.” And he sent them away.

When they told him their story, the Buddha declared, “Bhikkhus, because of his wrong view, Sañjaya considers the inessential to be the essential and the essential to be inessential. Putting away the inessential, you held on to the essential.”

So Sāriputta and Mahā-Moggallāna began to work for Arahatsip. Sāriputta went to a cave near Rājagaha called the Bear’s Den. And Moggallāna went to the forest near Kallavalaputta in Magadha. He put great effort into his meditation, but even so, he wasn’t able to overcome his sleepiness. He tried his best not to fall asleep, but he was unable to keep his body erect and his head straight.

But the Buddha, with a teacher’s solicitude for his disciples, didn’t lose sight of him. With his supernormal vision, he perceived the difficulties Moggallāna was having. And he appeared before him. As soon as he saw the Buddha standing in front of him, most of his sleepiness, fatigue, and restlessness vanished.

“Are you nodding, Moggallāna?” the Buddha asked. “Yes, Lord,” he replied. “Well, then, Moggallāna,” the Buddha instructed him, “whenever drowsiness comes, you shouldn’t give attention to it, you shouldn’t dwell on it. In that way, it’s possible that your drowsiness will vanish. But if it doesn’t vanish, then you should remember the teachings you have heard and you should review and examine the teachings. If drowsiness still persists, you should repeat in full detail the teaching as you have heard it and learned it. If you are still drowsy, you should pull both ear lobes and rub your limbs with your hands. If you are still drowsy, you should get up

from your seat and wash your eyes with water and look around in all directions and look up at the stars. If drowsiness has still not gone away, you should give attention to the perception of light, to daylight, both day and night. Thus, with your mind clear and unclouded, you should cultivate a mind that is full of brightness. If this doesn't work, you should keep the attention on the body, not letting it stray, and walk up and down, being aware of going back and forth. If all else fails, you may then, mindfully and clearly aware, lie down in the lion position—that is, lying on the right side with one foot placed on the other—and keep in mind the thought of getting up. When you wake you should get up quickly, thinking, 'I mustn't indulge in the comfort of resting and reclining, in the pleasure of sleeping.' ”

So you can see that even for the chief disciples, Ānāpāna meditation isn't easy. Moggallāna was able to work, thanks to the Buddha's protection and guidance, and he reached Arahatsip within a week. For Sāriputta it took another week because he was second only to the Buddha in understanding the Dhamma, and this understanding required more work.

The Buddha's Advice to King Pasenadi¹

The Buddha also gave advice to a layman on how to avoid sleepiness. At one time, King Pasenadi of Kosala came to see the Buddha and he walked up and down looking very tired. The Buddha asked him if he had come before having his rest. The king answered that no, he always suffered greatly after

¹*The Kindred Sayings*, I, p. 108 and *Buddhist Legends*, III, pp. 76-78, 206.

eating a meal. You see, he was in the habit of eating boiled rice by the bucketful, accompanied by sauces and curries. So the Buddha told Pasenadi that over-eating always brings suffering, and he pronounced the following stanza:

If a man is indolent, eats too much,
Spends his time sleeping and lies and rolls about
Like a big hog fed on grain,
Such a simpleton will enter the womb again and again.

And he concluded the stanza with the following verse:

If a man is constantly mindful, is moderate in what he eats,
His suffering will be slight. He will grow old slowly and
live long.

The Buddha taught this verse to Prince Uttara and told him to recite it whenever the king had a meal. After a while the king was content with a small portion of rice, and he became thin and cheerful.

Preparing for Awakening

I have mentioned several times the importance of past good actions, developing the ten *pāramīs*. Some of you may be worried about whether you have a good stock of *pāramīs*. Sayagyi U Ba Khin said that we can assume that only those individuals who have matured in the accumulation of virtues will be inclined to make a bid for release and take seriously to courses of Buddhist meditation.

We may be accumulating *pāramīs* in order to become an Arahāt. This can take from approximately one hundred to one

thousand world cycles.¹ But someone who aims higher will have to work even longer. If one aspires to be one of the eighty leading disciples, it will take ten thousand world cycles. It takes even more preparation for one who aspires to be one of the two chief disciples. Greater still is the preparation to be a non-teaching Buddha (a Pacceka Buddha), and then there are even three degrees of preparation for teaching Buddhas: a teaching Buddha whose most developed quality is wisdom (*paññā*); a teaching Buddha who is strongest in faith or confidence (*saddhā*); and finally, for a Buddha who is highest in effort (*virīya*), it takes sixteen *asankheyyas* and one hundred thousand world cycles. So the next Buddha in this world cycle, Metteyya, who is the type of Buddha taking the most preparation, started working on the perfections before the Buddha Gotama started.

We have quoted many times from *The Path of Purification* (Visuddhimagga) by Ashin Buddhaghosa. When he first went from India to Sri Lanka, it was to study the commentaries on the Pāli Canon. When he asked to see the texts, the bhikkhus in Sri Lanka gave him two lines of verse and asked him to write a commentary on them as a test of his sincerity and understanding. The result was a book that is over eight hundred pages in translation and which summarizes all the essentials of the teachings found in the Pāli texts. The bhikkhus, when they read this commentary, *The Path of Purification*, exclaimed that Buddhaghosa must be the Bodhisatta

¹See *What Buddhism Is* and “A Treatise on the Pāramīs” (in *The All-Embracing Net of Views*), p. 325.

(the one intent on Awakening) who would become the next Buddha, Metteyya.¹

Sayagyi U Ba Khin, in speaking of this commentary, said that if we divided it into one thousand parts and then divided Sayagyi's own teaching into one thousand parts and compared them, they would fit together, part by part, perfectly.

Now we shouldn't use an aspiration as an excuse for not working. Only a Buddha can confirm an aspiration and give a sure prediction. That is because only a Buddha can see far enough back and far enough ahead to see if a person has made the right preparation and has the potential to fulfil an aspiration.

There is the case of a bhikkhu given in *The Path of Purification*.² The Elder Mahā-Saṅgharakkhita, when lying on his deathbed, was asked whether he had attained Awakening. He answered no. A young bhikkhu said to him, "Venerable sir, people have come from as far away as twelve leagues, thinking you have reached Nibbāna. It will be a disappointment for many if you die as an ordinary man."

The elder said, "Friend, thinking I would see the Buddha Metteyya, I didn't try for insight. Help me to sit up and give me the chance." The young bhikkhu helped him to sit up and started to leave the room. Just as he left, the elder snapped his fingers to indicate that he had attained Arahatsip.

The bhikkhus assembled and said to him that it must be difficult to attain the supreme state in the hour of death, but he

¹See *The Path of Purification*, p. xxii (quoting from the Mahāvamsa).

²Chapter 1, ¶ 135.

said, “That wasn’t difficult, friends. But I’ll tell you what *is* difficult. Friends, I see no action done by me without mindfulness and unknowingly since the time I ordained.” So you can see how difficult it is to be mindful for those of us who haven’t reached the goal. And if the bhikkhu said that it was easy to reach Nibbāna, the meaning here is that the final goal was easy because all the necessary work had already been done. Until we have prepared ourselves, it won’t only be difficult, it will be impossible.

Another thing to know concerning aspirations is that if we have made an aspiration and had it confirmed by a Buddha, it is certain that we won’t reach Awakening until the time is right. But the more we prepare, the harder we work, the easier it will be to fulfil our wishes. If we don’t work, we may have to suffer a great deal.

Too Much Effort, the Case of Soṇa¹

We have talked a great deal about making an effort, but let me tell you the case of a bhikkhu who made too much effort. During the Buddha’s time, there was a young man named Soṇa who was so delicate, hair grew on the soles of his feet. One day, the king, Bimbisāra of Rājagaha, assembled representatives from eighty thousand villages and he sent a message for Soṇa to come. Soṇa’s parents cautioned him that even though the king sent for him because he wanted to see the soles of his feet, he should be careful not to show disrespect by pointing the soles of his feet towards the king. He should sit cross-legged, with the soles uppermost so the king could

¹*The Book of the Discipline*, IV, pp. 236-246.

see them. Soṇa was carried to the palace and there, he seated himself as he had been told to do. The king instructed the representatives concerning lay life. Then he said, “Now go and pay respects to the Buddha. He will instruct you in the aims of the lives to come.” They went to the Buddha, who taught them. They took the Triple Refuge and left. But Soṇa stayed and asked to be ordained a bhikkhu.

When he began to work, he walked up and down, striving for progress, and his delicate feet blistered. The walk was covered with blood. So the Buddha went to him and sat down on the seat prepared for him. He asked Soṇa, “While you were alone, Soṇa, didn’t you just think, ‘I am as energetic as any of the Buddha’s disciples. And yet my heart isn’t free of the taints through not clinging. My family is still rich. I could use these riches and make merit. Suppose I return to lay life and use those riches to make merit?’ ” Soṇa evidently felt he hadn’t acquired enough *pāramīs* in the past to attain release. But that was not his problem.

The Buddha asked him further, “Were you a good lute player when you were a layman?”

“Yes, Lord,” Soṇa answered.

“When the strings of your lute were too taut, did your lute sound well and respond well then?”

“No, Lord,” was the reply.

“When the strings of your lute were too slack, did your lute sound well and respond well?”

And again the answer was no.

“When the strings of your lute were neither too taut nor too slack, but were evenly tuned, did your lute sound well and respond well then?”

“Yes, Lord,” Soṇa answered.

“Similarly, Soṇa, making too much effort leads to agitation, and too little effort leads to slackness. Therefore, work for well-balanced energy, acquire well-balanced spiritual faculties, and take that as your sign.”

“Yes, Lord,” Soṇa replied.

So this is my message to you, take that as your sign:

Not too taut nor too slack,

Work with balanced energy.

You are bound to succeed in due course if you follow
our instructions scrupulously.

DAY FIVE: MORNING DISCOURSE

*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā manosetthā manomayā
Manasā ce paduṭṭhena bhāsati vā karoti vā
Tato naṃ dukkham anveti cakkam va vahato padaṃ.*

Phenomena are preceded by mind.
Mind is their chief; they are made of mind.
If a person speaks or acts with an evil mind,
Then suffering follows him as a wheel
Follows the foot of the ox.

Dhammapada v. 1

The Story of Cakkhupāla

During the Buddha's time, there was a bhikkhu who became an Arahat and at the same time lost his eyesight.¹ Even an Arahat isn't an exception to the law of cause and effect, and as long as his material body with its mental activity lasts, unwholesome deeds done in the past can result in such things as illness. The difference between the awakened person and an ordinary person is that once a person is awakened, there's no longer the conflict and reaction to pain—or pleasure, for that matter. So there's no mental suffering.

Some bhikkhus came to the monastery where this Arahat was staying, and they were looking around, as the Buddha and eighty great disciples were there too. But a heavy rain prevented them from seeing the bhikkhu Cakkhupāla, so they

¹*Buddhist Legends*, I 146-158.

decided to go in the morning. The rain stopped during the night and Cakkhupāla went out to walk up and down. Due to the rain, the walk was covered with insects. As Cakkhupāla was blind, he stepped on them and killed many of them. When the bhikkhus came to visit him in the morning, they saw the insects and went to report this to the Buddha. “When he had his eyesight he lay around and slept all the time. Now that he is blind he takes it in his head to walk up and down,” they said.

When they mentioned that he had killed many insects, the Buddha asked them, “Did you see him killing them?” They answered no. “Just as you didn’t see him killing them, neither did he see those living creatures. Those who are free from unwholesome tendencies can have no intention of causing death.” So we can see that the mental volition accompanying an act is the most important aspect in the law of cause and effect.

The bhikkhus asked how someone who was an Arahāt could become blind. “Through the influence of his past volitional acts” was the answer. And the Buddha told the bhikkhus the story of the past life which caused Cakkhupāla to become blind.

In a past life, Cakkhupāla was a physician. He treated a woman who had trouble with her eyes. The woman promised to become his slave, together with her children, if he cured her. The cure worked, but the woman had second thoughts about being a slave and pretended that her eyes weren’t any better.

The physician knew she was faking and decided to get even. “I don’t need her fees,” he thought to himself, “so I’ll

make her blind.” And he gave her an ointment which he made her apply and she lost her eyesight. The Buddha ended his explanation with the verse we quoted from the Dhammapada, explaining that deeds done in the past inevitably bear fruits at some time or other:

Phenomena are preceded by mind.
Mind is their chief; they are made of mind.
If a person speaks or acts with an evil mind,
Then suffering follows him as a wheel
Follows the foot of the ox.

In this story we see the aspect of *kamma* in which there is retribution for volitional acts. There is also a continuation aspect, the transmission of individual characteristics, impressions, tendencies, and so on throughout one’s lives in the cycles of rebirth (*samsāra*). An Arahant is free from all impurities, but he must reap the fruit of all the seeds which he himself has sown as long as the mind-body entity lasts. The Buddhas and Arahants don’t accumulate fresh *kamma* as they have eradicated the roots—ignorance and craving—but like all other beings they aren’t exempt from the inevitable consequences of good and bad actions done in the past. Mind precedes all actions. It serves as the principal element both in performing and in reacting to deeds. It is mind that rules and shapes action. Words and deeds are also produced by mind.

The Story of Maṭṭhakundali

In this first verse of the Dhammapada, and in the second, which we will examine in a moment, the Buddha emphasizes the great part the mind plays in men’s lives. He explains how

deeds are good or evil according to the pure or impure state of mind. And he speaks of the fact that the consequences of such deeds are inevitable:

*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomayā
Manasā ce pasannena bhāsatī vā karotī vā
Tato naṃ sukham anveti chāyā va ananpāyinī.*

Phenomena are preceded by mind.

Mind is their chief; they are made by mind.

If a person speaks or acts with a pure mind,

Happiness follows him like a never departing shadow.

Dhammapada v. 2

This second verse is the complement of the first. The first taught that evil results in evil. This one shows us that good results in good. This verse was spoken with regard to Maṭṭhakuṇḍali, the son of a rich man who was exceedingly stingy.¹ The boy suffered from jaundice and was on the point of death because his father was so afraid of spending money he wouldn't call a doctor to treat his son. When he finally did call a doctor, it was too late.

The Buddha perceived the sad condition of Maṭṭhakuṇḍali and went by his house so the boy would see him before he died. The Buddha knew that he would then die with a pure heart. As a consequence, the boy would be reborn in a Deva plane and be able to receive the teachings there and reach the first stage of Awakening, and his father, seeing the fate of his son, would attain that stage as well.

¹*Buddhist Legends*, I 159-165.

The Story of Paṭācārā

Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve apassaṃ udayabbayaṃ
Ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo passato udayabbayaṃ.

One could live a hundred years not understanding that all
 conditioned states rise and pass away.

It would be far better to live one day understanding all
 conditioned states rise and pass away.

Dhammapada v. 113

This verse was given in connection with Paṭācārā.¹ She was the daughter of a wealthy merchant of Sāvattthi, worth four hundred millions. When she grew up, her parents put her in a palace seven storeys high and had her guarded, but she misconducted herself with her servant. Knowing her parents would never approve, she and the servant ran away. They lived in a distant village, the husband farming and gathering firewood and leaves in the forest, Paṭācārā doing all the cooking and washing.

In due course she became pregnant. She begged her husband to take her home to her parents, saying, "A mother and father always have a soft spot in their heart for a child." But the husband was afraid of what the parents would do to him and refused. So she decided to go on her own. She left word with the neighbours and went. When the husband came home and learned what had happened, he set out to follow her. He overtook her, tried to persuade her to return, but she refused. And on the way she gave birth to a son. It no longer seemed necessary to continue on home now, so they returned to the

¹*Buddhist Legends*, II 250-256.

village. And a second time she became pregnant and left for home. Her husband caught up with her again and she felt the birth pains.

But this time, as the husband was looking for material to build a shelter, a deadly snake bit him and he died. Paṭācārā gave birth to a son alone. A storm raged all night long and she took her children in her arms and crouched on the ground to protect them. All night she stayed in this position. The next morning, thinking her husband had abandoned her, she set out again. Soon she came across the body of her husband and she said, “My husband is dead because of me,” and she continued towards her parents’ house wailing and lamenting.

She came to a river that was swollen because of the storm and as she was too weak to wade across the stream with both children, she left the older boy on the near bank and carried the new-born baby across. She laid him down and started back for the older boy. When she was in midstream, a hawk swooped down and took the new-born baby, mistaking him for a piece of meat. The mother raised her hands and screamed, “Get away! Get away! (*Su! Su!*)” The older boy saw his mother raise her hands and thought she was calling him. He fell in the stream and was carried away.

Paṭācārā continued on her way, all the more upset at the loss of her two sons. On the road she met a man from Sāvattī. She asked about her family. The man said, “Please don’t ask me about them. Ask about anyone else you wish.” But she insisted and was told the storm had destroyed the house, and her parents and brother had died. “Look,” the man said, “you can see the smoke of their cremation over there.”

This was too much. Paṭācārā lost her mind. She wandered about without any clothes, but she was unaware that she was naked. She wandered around, weeping and wailing for her husband, her sons, her parents, and her brother.

The Buddha saw her coming from afar as he was teaching the bhikkhus, and he knew that she had been fulfilling the perfections for one hundred thousand world cycles. At the time of the Buddha Padmuttara, she had been present when he pointed out a bhikkhunī who was foremost among the bhikkhunīs in being versed in the Dhamma, and she made an aspiration to one day meet a future Buddha and attain the same status. Buddha Padmuttara considered whether the potential was present in her and whether in the future this would happen, and then he gave a sure prediction that she would encounter the Buddha Gotama and fulfil her aspiration. Only a Buddha can have that kind of vision and give a sure prediction.

So when the Buddha saw Paṭācārā, he knew that only he could be a refuge to her. The moment the disciples saw her coming, they wanted to drive her away, but the Buddha told them to allow her to approach. When she came up, he said to her, “Return to your right mind.” And she was suddenly aware of her state and crouched on the ground because she was ashamed of her nakedness. A man threw his cloak over her. Then she approached the Buddha, paid respects, and asked him to be her refuge, and she told him of all that had happened.

The Buddha said to her, “In the round of birth and decay, you have wept over the loss of sons and loved ones over and over again. You have shed more tears than there is water in the four oceans.” And he gave the following stanza:

The four oceans contain a small amount of water
Compared with the tears that man has shed,
Distraught through sorrow and suffering.
Woman, why do you remain heedless?

As he spoke, her grief became less intense. Seeing that her grief had calmed somewhat, he told her, “Paṭācārā, sons and loved ones cannot be a shelter or a refuge to one who is on his way to a future life. How much less so during the present life. The wise should restrain themselves through moral actions and thus make clear the path leading to Nibbāna.” At the end of the Buddha’s discourse, she became established in the first stage of Awakening, and the taints in her, which were as numerous as the particles of dust in the whole earth, were burned away.

She requested that the Buddha admit her to the Order of Bhikkhunīs and as a bhikkhunī continued to work for full Awakening. One day she was washing her feet and as she poured out the water, some spilled on the ground. The water ran a little way and stopped. The second time, it ran a little further. A third time it went even further. And she used this as her subject of meditation. “Just as the water I spilled the first time ran a little way,” she reflected, “living beings in this world die when they are young. And just as the water I spilled the second time ran a little further, living beings in this world die when in the prime of life. And like the water that went still further the third time, living beings in this world die in old age.”

The Buddha, seated in his Perfumed Chamber, saw that she was ready for full liberation. He sent forth his luminous image and said to her, “Paṭācārā, it’s far better to live a single

day or even a single moment seeing the rise and fall of the five aggregates of being than to live a hundred years without seeing their rise and fall.” And he instructed her using the verse we quoted at the beginning:

One could live a hundred years not understanding that
all conditioned states rise and pass away.

It would be far better to live one day understanding all
conditioned states rise and pass away.

Dhammapada v. 113

At the conclusion of the verse, Paṭācārā attained Arahatship, along with the supramundane faculties, and she became foremost among the bhikkhunīs in being versed in the Dhamma.

The Four Noble Truths

Faith is no doubt a prerequisite, but it’s the practice of the teaching which really counts. Therefore, the Buddha said:

Each individual must walk along the path himself.
Buddhas can only point the way.¹

Today, this afternoon, we will be teaching you Vipassanā Meditation. Before we teach you Vipassanā Meditation, I owe you some explanation of the Four Noble Truths.

The Four Noble Truths, taught by the Buddha in his first sermon, form the basis on which this system of philosophy is

¹See the Buddha’s discourse to Gaṇaka-Moggallāna, *The Middle Length Sayings*, I 52-57.

founded.¹ This sermon is known as the Dhamma-cakka-pavattana Sutta—that is, the Discourse to Set in Motion the Wheel of the Dhamma. The first three of the Four Noble Truths expound the philosophy of the Buddha while the fourth, namely the Eightfold Noble Path, which is a Code of Morality-cum-philosophy, serves as a means to the end.

Now, what are the Four Noble Truths? They are: (1) *Dukkha-sacca*, the Truth of Suffering; (2) *Samudaya-sacca*, the Truth of the Origin of Suffering; (3) *Nirodha-sacca*, the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, the ending of suffering; and (4) *Magga-sacca*, the Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

In order that one can come to a complete understanding of the fundamental concepts of the philosophy of the Buddha, emphasis is laid on the need for the realization of the Truth of Suffering. To bring home this point, the Buddha tackled the problem from two different angles: by a process of reasoning and by a process of experiencing.

In using the approach of reasoning, the Buddha made his disciples see that life is a struggle, life is suffering, old age is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering. But the influence of sensuality is so strong in mankind, men are normally apt to forget themselves, to forget the price they have to pay for sensual pleasures.

Just think for a moment of how uncomfortable it must be in the prenatal period, and of how the child has to struggle for existence from the moment of birth. Think of the preparations

¹This discussion is based on Sayagyi U Ba Khin's *What Buddhism Is* (see *Dhamma Texts*, pp. 15ff.

necessary if one is to face life and how, as an adult, the struggle goes on up to the last breath. You can very well imagine what life is. Life is indeed suffering.

The more one is attached to self, the greater the suffering. But the pains and suffering a man has to undergo are suppressed in favour of momentary sensual pleasures that are only occasional flashes of light in the darkness. If it weren't for the delusion and ignorance (*moha*) which keeps him from the truth, man would surely have worked out the way for emancipation from the round of "life, suffering, and death."

In using the process of experiencing, the Buddha taught how one could see for oneself the true nature of all conditioned states. He made it known to his disciples that the human body is composed of *kalāpas* (sub-atomic units), each dying simultaneously as it becomes. Each *kalāpa* is a mass formed of the eight nature elements. The first four are called the *mahā-bhūtas*; that is to say, the essential material qualities which are predominant in a *kalāpa*. They are *pathavī*, *āpo*, *tejo* and *vāyo*, or the element of extension (literally, earth), cohesion (water), radiation (heat and cold), and motion (air). The other four elements are merely subsidiaries which are dependent on and born out of the first four. They are *vaṇṇa*, *gandha*, *rasa*, *ojā* or colour, smell, taste, and nutritive essence.

A *kalāpa* is the minutest particle noticeable in the physical plane. It is only when the eight nature-elements, which merely have the characteristic of behaviour, are together that the entity of a *kalāpa* is formed. In other words, during the very brief moment of the co-existence of these eight nature-elements of behaviour, there is a mass which is known as a *kalāpa*. These

kalāpas are in a state of perpetual change or flux. They are nothing but a stream of energy, just as a candle's light or the light of an electric bulb are streams of energy. The body, as we call it, isn't an entity as it seems to be, but a continuum of matter with the life-force co-existing.

Sayagyi U Ba Khin, in his booklet *What Buddhism Is*, points out that to a casual observer a piece of iron is motionless. But the scientist knows that it's composed of electrons, all in a state of perpetual change or flux. If this is true of a piece of iron, then what will be the case of a living organism such as a human being? The changes that are taking place inside a human body must be more violent. And Sayagyi asked, "Does man feel the rocking vibrations within himself? Does the scientist who knows that all is in a state of change or flux ever feel that his own body is only energy and vibration?" What will be the repercussion on the mental attitude of the man who introspectively sees that his own body is mere energy and vibration? To quench his thirst, a person can drink a glass of water from a village well. But suppose his eyes are as powerful as a microscope. He would surely hesitate to drink the well water in which he would see the magnified microbes. So, also, when he comes to a realization of the perpetual change within himself (impermanence, *anicca*), he must necessarily come to the understanding, as a sequel to that, of the realization of the Truth of Suffering. This comes through acutely feeling the radiation, vibration and friction of the atomic units within. Indeed, life is suffering, both within and without, to all appearances and in ultimate reality.

What then is the origin of suffering? The origin of suffering, the Buddha said, is craving (*taṇhā*). Once the seed of

desire is sown, it grows into greed and multiplies into craving or lust—either for power or for material gains. The man in whom this seed is sown becomes a slave to these cravings and he is automatically driven to strenuous efforts of mind and body to keep pace with them until the end comes. The final result must surely be the accumulation of the evil mental forces generated by his own actions, words, and thoughts that are motivated by desire (*loba*) and anger (*dosa*) that are inherent in him.

Philosophically, it's the mental forces of actions (*saṅkhāra*) which react in the course of time on the person originating the actions, and these mental forces of actions are responsible for the stream of mind and matter, the Origin of Suffering within.

What, then, is the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering? The path is none other than the Noble Eightfold Path taught by the Buddha in his first sermon. As we have already said, this Eightfold Path is divided into three main stages: *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*.

Sīla (morality) includes three steps: Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood. *Samādhi* (equanimity of mind) includes three steps: Right Exertion, Right Attentiveness, Right Concentration. And *paññā* (wisdom) has two steps: Right Aspiration and Right Understanding. We have already discussed in detail the first six steps coming under *sīla* and *samādhi*. Now let us examine *paññā*: Right Aspiration (*sammā-saṅkappa*) and Right Understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*).

Right Understanding of the truth is the aim and object of Buddhism, and Right Aspiration is the analytical study of mind and matter, both within and without, to come to a real-

ization of truth. Right Aspiration is also translated by some as Right Contemplation.

The terms for mind and matter in Pāli are *nāma* and *rūpa*. *Nāma* is so called because of its tendency to incline towards an object of sense. *Rūpa* is so called because of its impermanence due to perpetual change. The nearest terms in English to *nāma* and *rūpa* are therefore mind and matter.

Nāma, or mind, strictly speaking, is the term applied to consciousness, feeling or sensation, perception, and volitional energies (*viññāna*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*). These, together with matter (*rūpa*), the material state, make up what we call the Five Aggregates (*pañca-kkhandā*). It is in these five aggregates that the Buddha has summed up all the mental and physical phenomena of existence which in reality is a continuum of mind and matter co-existing, but which to a layman is taken to be his personality or ego.

In Right Aspiration, the disciple who has developed by then the powerful lens of *samādhi* will focus his attention into himself and by introspective meditation make an analytical study of the nature of matter first, then of the nature of mind and mental properties. He feels and at times he also sees the *kalāpas* in their true state. He begins to realize that both matter and mind are in constant change. They are impermanent and fleeting. As his power of concentration increases, the nature of forces in him becomes more and more vivid.

This is the explanation given by Sayagyi in his lectures, *What Buddhism Is*.

DAY FIVE: EVENING DISCOURSE

Ti-lakkhaṇa:

Meditating on the Three Characteristics

Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ kusalassa upasampadā
Sacittapariyodapanam etam Buddhāna sāsanaṃ.

Avoiding all evil, doing good,

Purifying one's own mind—

This is the teaching of the Buddhas.

Dhammapada v. 183

“Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā” ti yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindatī dukkhe, esa maggo visuddhiyā.

“Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā” ti yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindatī dukkhe, esa maggo visuddhiyā.

“Sabbe dhammā anattā” ti yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindatī dukkhe, esa maggo visuddhiyā.

“All conditioned states are impermanent.”

When one discovers this through one's own wisdom,

One is repulsed by this suffering.

This is the path to purity.

“All conditioned states are unsatisfactory.”

When one discovers this through one's own wisdom,

One is repulsed by this suffering.

This is the path to purity.

“All states, conditioned or unconditioned, are without a
controlling, enduring self.”

When one discovers this through one's own wisdom,

One is repulsed by this suffering.

This is the path to purity.

Dhammapada vv. 277–279

The story given in the Dhammapada Commentary concerning the first of these verses is as follows: There were five hundred bhikkhus who had received a subject of meditation from the Buddha. They had made every effort but weren't able to attain full Awakening. So they returned to the Buddha to obtain a subject of meditation that was better suited to their needs. The Buddha thought to himself, "What will be the most profitable meditation subject for these bhikkhus?" And he saw their past. During the time of Buddha Kassapa, this group of bhikkhus had devoted themselves to the meditation on the characteristic of impermanence for twenty thousand years. Therefore, the Buddha now taught them how to meditate using the characteristic of impermanence (*anicca*). "Bhikkhus," he said to them, "in the sphere of sensual existence and in the sphere of non-sensual existence, all the aggregates are impermanent. They have no ultimate reality." And so he spoke the verse beginning, "All conditioned states are impermanent."

The second verse, on the unsatisfactory nature of all conditioned states, was given to another group of bhikkhus. Their story is the same as the first group except that in their past life, they had used the characteristic of unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) as their subject of meditation.

For the third verse the story is the same except that these bhikkhus had used the lack of a controlling, enduring self (*anattā*) as their subject of meditation.

And all three groups, working on subjects suited to them, were able to attain Arahatship.

Sayagyi U Ba Khin, in his discourse, “The Essentials of Buddha-Dhamma in Meditative Practice,” laid emphasis on the need for the correct understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā*. These are the three characteristics of all conditioned things. Sayagyi said, “If you know impermanence (*anicca*) truly, you know *dukkha* (suffering) also as a sequel, and the lack of ego (*anattā*) as ultimate truth. But it takes time to understand the three together.

“Impermanence (*anicca*) is the essential factor which must be experienced first and understood by practice. A mere reading of books on Buddhism or a book-knowledge of the Buddha-Dhamma will not be enough for the understanding of true *anicca* because the experiential aspect will be missing. It is only through experience and understanding of the nature of change (*anicca*) as an ever-changing process within your very self that you can understand change in the way the Buddha would have you understand it. This understanding of *anicca* can be developed as it was in the days of the Buddha by persons who have no book-knowledge whatsoever of Buddhism.

“To understand *anicca*, one must follow strictly and diligently the Eightfold Noble Path which, as we have seen, is divided into the three steps of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*: Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom or Insight.

“*Sīla*, or virtuous living, is the base for *samādhi*, the control of the mind to one-pointedness. It is only when concentration is good that one can develop *paññā*, wisdom.

“So, *sīla* and *samādhi* are the prerequisites for *paññā*. By *paññā* or insight is meant the understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā* through the practice of Vipassanā, that is to say, Insight Meditation.”

Full Understanding Through Investigating

Now let us look at the exposition of the three characteristics of all conditioned states and the full understanding through investigating (*tirana-pariññā*) as given by the teacher of Sayagyi's teacher. Venerable Ledi Sayadaw discusses these three characteristics in his book *The Manual of Insight* (*Vipassanā-dīpanī*).¹ Ledi Sayadaw was a very learned bhikkhu in Myanmar who lived at the beginning of this century.

The three prominent features are: the mark of impermanence (*anicca-lakkhaṇa*), the mark of suffering (*dukkha-lakkhaṇa*), and the mark of lack of soul (*anattā-lakkhaṇa*). This evening we will concentrate on impermanence.

Radical Change and Subtle Change

There are two aspects of impermanence: radical change and change over a longer term or what could be termed subtle change.² In Pāli, radical change is called *vipariṇāma*, and subtle change is called *aññathābhāva* (literally, becoming something else). If radical and subtle changes are seen clearly, it will be obvious that mental and material phenomena are actually impermanent. There are five prominent features in subtle change: birth, growth, continuance, decay, and death. We can illustrate these with the example of a lamp. Lighting the lamp is the birth of the flame. This is the birth of the material phenomenon, but it's not fire. We observe that the flame flares up. This is the growth of the material phenomenon, but it's not fire. We observe that the flame continues in its normal

¹*The Wheel*, Nos. 31, 32.

²See Ven. Ledi Sayadaw, *The Manuals of Buddhism*, p. 24.

state of burning. This is the continuance of the material phenomenon, but it's not fire. We observe the flame dying down. This is the decay of the material phenomenon, but it's not fire. We observe that the flame goes out. This is the death of the material phenomenon, but it's not fire. The property of heat is the fire. The flame quivers because of the presence of these prominent features. Or it may quiver when the lamp is moved, and in that case it may be said that the quivering is due to wind. These five prominent features of the subtle changes in the fire are the marks of impermanence. Through observing and taking note of these five features, it can be understood that the flame is impermanent. Similarly, it should be understood that all moving things are impermanent.

Our teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin advised us, "For progress in Vipassanā meditation, a student must keep knowing *anicca* (impermanence) as continuously as possible." The Buddha said, "It would be to your benefit if you could keep on knowing *anicca* even when answering the call of nature."

Now let us examine again from the point of view of Abhidhamma philosophy. When we know that the five aggregates (the five *khandhas*) immediately arise and then disappear, it's not difficult to visualize that such things are impermanent. They're born and then perish (*udayabbaya*, meaning "rise and fall, birth and death"; *khandhāṇaṃ udayabbayaṃ*, meaning "rise and fall of the aggregates").

Not only in modern science but also in Buddhism, there are fundamental particles or *kalāpas*. In the human body there are millions of atoms and cells. They consist of a temporary union of the four primaries which we discussed last night. The smallest particles, *kalāpas*, arise and disappear. The old is

succeeded by the new, giving rise to the concept of *anicca*, impermanence.

By introspective meditation on the realities of nature in himself, it came vividly to the Buddha that there is no substantiality as there seems to be in the human body. It is nothing but the sum total of innumerable millions of these *kalāpas*. Each of them is about one part of a particle of dust raised by the wheel of a chariot in summer, the particle being divided into 46,656 parts. That is how our teacher, Sayagyi, explained this in one of his lectures.

The last words of the Buddha just before he passed into Mahāparinibbāna were, “Decay or *anicca* is inherent in all component things. Work out your own salvation with diligence.” This is in fact the essence of all his teachings during the forty-five years of his long ministry.

Our teacher Sayagyi reminded us, “If you will keep up the awareness of *anicca* that is inherent in all component things, you are sure to reach the goal in the course of time.” And he continued, “As you develop in the understanding of *anicca*, your insight into ‘what is true of nature’ will become greater and greater—so much so that eventually you will have no doubt whatsoever of the three characteristics of *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā*. It is then only that you are in a position to go ahead for the goal in view.”

So this will give us an introduction to appreciating the significance of impermanence, *anicca*. We will discuss the other two characteristics of all conditioned states—*dukkha* and *anattā*—in later talks.

The Five Aggregates¹

Now let us examine the five aggregates, the five *khandhā*:

- (1) Matter (*rūpa-kkhandha*) is what we know as material objects, both inside ourselves and outside ourselves.
- (2) Sensations or feelings (*vedanā-kkhandha*) are our experience of our bodies coming into contact with matter or thoughts.
- (3) Perceptions (*saññā-kkhandha*) mean the perceiving of colour or shape or sound, etc.; recognizing what we are experiencing.
- (4) Volitional acts (*saṅkhāra-kkhandha*) are mental acts; our response to contact.
- (5) Consciousness (*viññāṇa-kkhandha*) is the bare awareness of things, before we understand what we are experiencing.

Mind and Body. Looking at these five groups of existence, we might notice the importance the mind plays. Only one out of five is what we call hard matter, material existence. Four are what we call mind, mental activity. This is very different from dividing ourselves into mind and matter, as if they were equal. In fact, the mind is more important. This may seem hard for us to believe. We may be used to associating

¹For a detailed discussion of the five aggregates, see Ashin Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification*, Ch. III, ¶¶ 32-230; the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, (translated by Jagdish Kashyap, *Abhidhamma Philosophy* [reprinted by Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1982]; and by Mrs Rhys Davids, *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics* [P.T.S., reprinted 1984]); and Egerton C. Baptist, *Abhidhamma for the Beginner* (Colombo, Sri Lanka, ca. 1959).

reality with what we see and feel outside ourselves. Perhaps we think of our bodies as more real than our minds. Let us look into this a little more closely.

Matter. Matter is the result of the coming together of four basic elements, the Four Great Primaries (*cattāro mahā-bhūtā*) which are traditionally known as: solidity, liquidity, heat or cold, and motion (*paṭhavī, āpo, tejo, and vāyo*).

- (1) Solidity, or the earth element, includes whatever is recognizable through sensations of pressure or touch.
- (2) Liquidity, or the water element, includes continuity, cohesion.
- (3) Heat, or the fire element, includes the various degrees of heat and cold.
- (4) Motion, or the wind element, includes movement.

These four elements are present in all matter in varying degrees. There will be one element that will predominate and determine the characteristics of any particular material manifestation. A lump of clay, for example, will be experienced mainly as the earth element. But there is a certain amount of cohesion (the water element) holding it all together. There is also some heat. And if we could see inside the atomic structure, there is an amazing amount of movement.

We can experience all these elements for ourselves, except for cohesion. Solidity we can feel: weight, heaviness or lightness. Heat we can feel, or cold. We experience motion. Cohesion, however, we can only deduce intellectually, because we see that things don't fly apart. But on the level of direct experience, we can only feel one thing at a time, one thing after the other. If our powers of concentration aren't

highly developed, we may have the impression that one thing runs into another, but in actual fact our mind only knows one thing at a time.

Combinations of the four basic elements give secondary qualities: colour (*vaṇṇa*), smell (*gandha*), taste (*rasa*), and nutriment (*ojā*). Our lump of clay will be red or grey or brown, etc. If our sense of smell is good we will be able to smell it. And so forth.

These eight elements are all present in inanimate material things. For there to be life, vitality must be present. For there to be sensorial experiences, there must be physical sense organs: eyes to see, ears to hear, noses to smell, tongues to taste, bodies to feel, and minds to think and imagine.

Mind. The other four aggregates make up what we call mind.

Let us take *consciousness* first. In this context, consciousness is meant in a very limited sense. It is just bare awareness, without any recognition or reaction to what is being experienced. There are six kinds of consciousness, depending on the sense organ which leads to consciousness: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—because the mind is a sense which receives mental objects just as the eye receives light. These mental objects are ideas that are based on past experience, and past experience came through the first five senses.

The Buddha explained that it can be compared to different kinds of fire.¹ When grass is burning, we call it a grass fire. If wood is burning we say it's a wood fire. So it is with consciousness. When the right elements come together for there to

¹*The Middle Length Sayings*, I 315.

be sight, there is “eye consciousness.” These elements include: *matter*—that is, a body or object made up of the four essential elements, in other words, a visual form; *life*—you have to be alive to see; *the eye* (or eye basis)—if you are blind you won’t see; *light*—if it’s pitch black, you cannot see anything; and *attention* (or consciousness)—if you are in a coma or in deep sleep, you won’t see. All these elements must be present for there to be sight-consciousness. If we say “He doesn’t see,” then we are describing the lack of sight-consciousness. It doesn’t exist when one of these elements isn’t present. When it’s dark at night, for example, and no source of light is present, then sight-consciousness doesn’t arise in the organ of the eye. It is temporarily suspended. But it will arise if the light of a fire is introduced. And if the light’s put out, sight-consciousness also will stop.

Just as there were five prominent features for the material understanding of change, there are the same five features for mental phenomena, such as consciousness. Just as the light from the flame comes into existence, grows, continues, decays and dies out, so too, sight-consciousness, which is dependent on that light, will come into being, grow, continue, decay and die out.

The presence or absence of consciousness that depends on the functions of hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching can be understood in the same way we have explained for sight consciousness. There must be sounds present for the ear, odours present for the nose, tastes present for the tongue, and ideas, thoughts and images present for the mind. And all, of course, are impermanent, both in terms of radical change and subtle change. Mind consciousness has many different mani-

festations. The element of radical and subtle change is apparent through the changes of the different kinds of thought. The mental consciousness accompanying the different types of sensations, for example, are very evident, whether it be the changes of pleasure, pain, joy, grief, or a neutral feeling. Changes in perception are very obvious too, with initial application, sustained application, from good to bad and back again. Anyone can easily discover that while they are sitting alone, many different emotions will colour the mental consciousness, each arising, one after the other: greed, disinterestedness, hate, loving kindness, and so on.

Now we come to the next aggregate, *perception*. Once we are conscious of anything that comes into the field of the senses, then there can be perceptions or recognition of the distinctive aspects of the object: such as red or blue or yellow, loud or soft, rough or smooth, etc. Perceptions, like consciousness, are of six kinds, depending on the six senses.

After the perception of an object comes a *sensation*. Again, there are six kinds of sensation or feeling, named for the six senses that give rise to them. So there are sensations that come into being through visual contact, auditory contact, etc.

But there is something new here too—another dimension we don't find in just bare awareness and recognition. The feelings or sensations are agreeable to our body or agreeable to our mind. Or they are disagreeable to our body or disagreeable to our mind. Finally, there are indifferent or neutral feelings.

Neutral feelings are easily overlooked, as we are much more used to thinking in terms of accepting or rejecting instead of just letting be. Many of these neutral feelings don't make as

strong an impact on us as the feelings which are liked or disliked.

In Vipassanā, we develop our awareness of sensations, learning to observe agreeable, disagreeable, and indifferent sensations with equanimity. This can be done with any one of the six senses, but the sensation of touch is the best for developing equanimity. The objects which stimulate the other five senses are very weak. We don't notice clearly the impact of light on the eye or sound on the ear, etc. The actual impact of most sense objects is accompanied by indifferent feelings. In the short space of time during which we simply register the fact that the eye is receiving light—before we react to the image conveyed by that light—we don't like or dislike any particular image. The response comes later.

With touch, however, the pleasant feeling that accompanies moral actions and the pain that accompanies immoral actions is immediate. The comparison given in the Pāli commentary¹ says that the impact on five of the senses is very faint, like hitting a wad of cotton with another wad of cotton. With the sense of touch, it's like putting the wad of cotton on an anvil and striking it with a hammer: the hammer will squash the cotton and make the anvil ring.

Now we come to the last aggregate and the one that is of greatest interest to us here in a meditation course. It is the aspect of reality we can do something about, and in doing the right thing, we can begin to come out of our suffering. This is *volitional acts* (*saṅkhāras*), acts of the will.

¹Ashin Buddhaghosa, *Atthasālinī*, 263 (*The Expositor*, 349f.).

This is above all the domain of reaction—the coming together of matter and mind. The combination of consciousness, the senses, objects to be sensed—all result in a perception of a particular object, a single sensation. And there is a response. We like. Or we dislike. Or we are indifferent. The sensation is either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. We react.

We tend to grasp what is pleasant, reject what is unpleasant, and ignore the neutral. We act. We either do a good act or a bad act. The energy associated with the act is called *kamma*. We act with mind, speech, or body. These acts will have consequences, cause and effect. Good acts will bring good results. Bad acts will bring unpleasant results. Neutral acts will bring no results.

If we could stop before there was any reaction, all that has happened up until the moment of reaction wouldn't lead to anything. The sensations will still be agreeable or disagreeable or neutral, but we won't cling to them or reject them. We will just leave it at that.

If you look closely at what I have just said, you may notice something rather surprising. Are we really saying we should stop doing good actions? It isn't quite that simple. There are two ways of judging actions. (1) One can judge an action by the results it will have in the world around the person who did the action. (2) One can judge an action by the results it will have for the person who did the act.

If we take the case of someone who is capable of living without reacting, without these volitional acts of the will, we will find that person's conscious acts are all for the good of the world around them. But as they are acts without the energy to create *kamma*, these acts will have no consequences for that

person. If we could see inside that person, we would see that he doesn't react. His actions aren't accompanied by desire for results or by disliking. We would find only spontaneous acts. Truly spontaneous acts will always be beneficial to others. Harmful acts will always be acts done after reacting. As you may have guessed, the person who can act spontaneously is a person who is fully liberated, fully awakened.

We will be capable of acting spontaneously only after we have reached our goal. In the meantime, we are learning. And we have to work with what we have. We have to start out from where we are now.

The acts of an ordinary person can be classified as good or bad, skilful or unskilful, leading to good fortune or leading to misfortune, leading to ordinary happiness or unhappiness. These actions can be premeditated or prompted or encouraged. They can be prompted either by someone else or by ourselves. Or actions can be unprompted, un-induced, automatic, spontaneous. So far, we have eight possibilities: all the combinations of good and bad, prompted and unprompted, by ourselves and by someone else.

Our actions can be accompanied by pleasure, displeasure, or by indifference. So three times eight makes for twenty-four possible kinds of actions. And our actions have root causes, too: desire, hatred, ignorance, conceit, non-desire, loving kindness, knowledge. But at this point, our mathematics gets complicated because more than one of these may be present for one action. Or in some cases, certain root causes cannot exist together. Bad actions, for example, will always be done out of ignorance. Greed or hatred may be present too, but not both. We cannot desire and hate something at the same time.

This may *seem* to be possible, though, because the mind works so fast, and we can desire something one split second and hate it the next split second.

On the other hand, good acts are sometimes done with knowledge, sometimes without. Let us take an example. A boy is walking down the road with his mother and they see a big stone in the road. The mother tells the boy to pick up the stone and throw it on the side of the road so no cars coming along will have an accident. The boy is happy to be helpful, so he picks up the stone and throws it. Here we have a good action, prompted by someone else, accompanied by pleasure.

But maybe the boy doesn't want to pick up the stone and does it only because his mother insists. It is still a good act, still prompted by someone else, but now it's accompanied by displeasure.

What if the boy is alone and thinks, "My mother would tell me to move the stone, and she'll be proud of me when I tell her"? He moves it happily: a good act, prompted from within, accompanied by pleasure.

Not all boys are so nice, however. A boy may come along, see the stone, and think, "I'll put it over here so a car is sure to hit it. My friends will think that's fun." He moves it happily: a bad act, prompted from within, accompanied by pleasure. And so on.

But what about someone who is awakened? How would we classify his actions? Here we must realize there are two levels of equanimity. For the ordinary person, there can be a sort of neutral emotion in between liking and disliking. But the desire to do, the desire to make things happen is still present. For the awakened person, there is a different kind of equa-

nimity. No desire to do enters into it. There is just pure action. There is a stone. He removes it. But no prompting is necessary; the liking, disliking isn't present. There is pure equanimity.

We can understand this intellectually, but it doesn't mean we'll be able to go out now and clear the roads of stones with perfect equanimity. No. To understand it directly, we'll have to develop our minds to the point where we have perfect control. Ānāpāna and Vipassanā are the way to do that. In the meantime, we should cultivate good actions even though our good acts aren't done with the purity of an awakened person.

It is an *unvicious* circle: the more good acts we do, the easier it is to lead good lives, and that makes it easier to concentrate, which helps us develop insight, which prompts us to do good deeds.

DAY SIX: MORNING DISCOURSE

Seeing the Deathless State for One Day is Better than 100 Years Without

*Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve apassaṃ amataṃ padaṃ.
Ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo passato amataṃ padaṃ.*

One could live a hundred years not seeing the deathless state. But knowing all things arise and vanish for just one day is better.

Dhammapada v. 114

The Story of Kisā-Gotamī¹

Yesterday I told you the story of Patācārā who lost all her family. There is a similar story, showing how the world is full of suffering.

There was a young mother by the name of Kisā-Gotamī. She was born in a poor family, and people took no notice of her. Her name, Kisā, meant “thin” or “small.” Then after she married and had a son, she became popular because of this. But her son died at an early age, and that which gave her importance in life was gone. She had never encountered death, so she didn’t understand. She thought the child was seriously ill, and she went around with the child on her hip, looking for a cure. Someone told her to go to the Buddha. By that time,

¹We use the version of this story given in the commentary to the Therīgāthā (see *Psalms of the Sisters*, pp. 106-108). A slightly different version is found in *Buddhist Legends*, II, 257-260.

she had almost gone crazy. People laughed at her, and she felt great agitation.

When she went to the Buddha, who was living in the Jetavana grove, he was teaching the bhikkhus. She stood in the hall and asked the Teacher to give her the medicine she had searched for in vain. The Buddha saw that she had never encountered a dead person before and that she was ready to be established in the Dhamma. He told her to bring him some mustard seeds. She started to leave, but the Buddha told her to wait a moment. "The mustard seeds must come from a house where no one has died," he told her.

So Kisā-Gotamī went around the town with her dead child on her hip, hoping to find what she thought would be a cure for him. But she soon discovered that there was no visitor as frequent as death. She began to realize that death is universal. The force of death overwhelmed her, and she saw that the Buddha wanted to teach her a lesson. She took the child to the cemetery. She knew now that he wasn't the only child that had died.

She returned to the Buddha and became a bhikkhunī. The meditation she had practised in the past came to her rescue. It wasn't difficult for her to realize that nothing endures forever. She realized that in all the planes of existence beings die, even in the Brahmā worlds. Only an Arahāt passes away completely, never to be born again, never to die again. She was ready for the higher prescription that would cure her once and for all.

The Buddha gave her a discourse on the four floods (*ogha*) which overwhelm us all. They are also known as the four taints or intoxicants (*āsava*). These are: (1) sensual

desire, (2) desiring continued existences, (3) holding wrong views, and (4) ignorance. An Arahāt is one who has crossed the floods (*ogha-tinno*). Kisā-Gotamī grasped the Truth which ordinary mortals fail to understand. When she attained the Deathless, the Buddha spoke the stanza saying that one day spent with the knowledge that all conditioned things arise and vanish is superior to a hundred years spent in ignorance.

The Story of Mother Visākhā¹

On another occasion, the woman who was the leading female lay disciple, Visākhā, came to the Buddha. Her clothes and hair were wet. When the Buddha asked what the reason was, she told him, “Lord, a dear, well-loved grandchild of mine has died. That is why I have come at this unusual hour with my clothes and hair wet.” This was a sign of mourning.

The Buddha asked Visākhā, “Would you like to have as many grandchildren as there are people in Sāvātthi?” To have many children was considered the greatest happiness in this world. So Visākhā answered yes to the Buddha’s question.

“But Visākhā,” the Buddha asked, “how many people die each day in Sāvātthi?”

“Lord, anywhere from one to ten people die each day in Sāvātthi. There is never a day that someone or other doesn’t die,” she replied.

“Then would you ever be without wet clothes and hair?” asked the Buddha.

¹For the story of Visākhā see *Buddhist Legends* II 59-84. On the death of her granddaughter, see *op. cit.*, 84f.

“No, Lord,” Visākhā answered. “I have had enough of so many children and grandchildren.”

And the Buddha told her that someone with one hundred loved ones would have one hundred pains. Even one loved one would mean pain. “Those who have no loved ones,” the Buddha said, “have no pains. They are without sorrow, dispassionate, undespairing.” And he pronounced the following verse:¹

Sorrow and mourning, suffering of every sort
Happen in the world because of loved ones.
When there are no loved ones they end.
They who have no loved ones are happy and sorrowless.
He who seeks dispassion without sorrow
Should have no loved one in the world.

We should remember, of course, that here, when the Buddha speaks of love, it’s in the sense of being attached.

Visākhā was known as Migāra’s mother. Migāra was actually her father-in-law. He was established in the Dhamma thanks to Visākhā, and he told her that because of that she was like a mother to him. It is in this spirit that the students address Sayamagyi as Mother Sayamagyi.

When Visākhā said that she had had enough of children and grandchildren, it was a significant remark because she had ten sons and ten daughters. Each of her children had ten sons and ten daughters. That made four hundred grandchildren. Each of the grandchildren had twenty children. So that meant

¹Udana, p. 92 (*Verses of Uplift*, pp. 111f.; also in *The Life of the Buddha*, p. 156).

there were 8,000 great-grandchildren. With Visākhā and her husband, there were 8,422 people in the family. It is said that when Visākhā was sitting with some of her daughters, granddaughters, and great-granddaughters, it was impossible to tell which one she was. It was only when she got up, pressing on her knees because she was older, that one could deduce which woman was Visākhā. Her beauty was incomparable. And she lived to be one hundred and twenty.

Throughout her life she fed the bhikkhus of Sāvatti. It was said that there wasn't a single bhikkhu living in Sāvatti who hadn't tasted her food. Every day she fed thousands and thousands of bhikkhus, bhikkhunīs and lay disciples.

Mother Visākhā was established in the first fruition state at the age of seven, but, as we have seen, this hadn't eradicated all suffering in her life. Suffering was gone only when she actually experienced the state of fruition, and she would need to work further to arrive at the stage when all suffering would be eliminated, once and for all.

Suffering (*dukkha*)¹

Yesterday we talked about the three characteristics of existence: impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and the lack of a permanent self (*anattā*), and we went into some detail concerning impermanence. This morning, let us examine suffering more closely.

¹This discussion of *dukkha* is based on Ledi Sayadaw's *Exposition of Insight* (Myanmar ed., *The Manuals of Buddhism*, p. 26; *The Wheel* 31/32, pp. 67-72).

The characteristics of impermanence, *anicca*, are intimately tied to the characteristics of suffering, *dukkha*. Whether the changes are abrupt—such as death and rebirth—or whether they are over a long term, as long as the body is alive, the possibility and inevitability of death is there. As long as there is change and impermanence, there is suffering.

Decay and death are the most feared things on the conditioned level of existence. We live for a certain period, but only because there are various things that sustain our lives and keep us going. If they aren't present we will die. Without food, air, and warmth, our bodies cannot live. But these bare necessities aren't enough. We have to fear many kinds of disease and ailments, both physical and mental. No matter how many precautions we take, we never know when some physical or mental disease will come. And even if we could avoid illnesses, our bodies decay when we grow old.

Every material phenomenon possesses these radical and subtle changes. Every mental phenomenon in the worlds of sensuous desires, in the fine-material worlds, and in the immaterial worlds in the Brahmā planes is subject to change. Men, Devas, and Brahmās, not to mention the beings of the lower realms, are all impermanent, and therefore they are all suffering. For the Devas and Brahmās, this characteristic of change is difficult to see as there is so much pleasure in their existence, and so they have difficulty appreciating suffering, *dukkha*. In that way, we can look on our pain as a friend that enables us to work for Right Understanding.

Suffering can be understood in its three aspects: (1) suffering as actual pain (*dukkha-dukkhatā*), (2) the suffering inherent in all conditioned states (*saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*), and

(3) suffering that results because impermanence exists (*vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*).

Suffering as actual pain covers both physical and mental pains. Inherent suffering refers to the oppressive nature of all conditioned states due to their continual arising and passing away. To have continued existence as a material and mental entity requires great effort, continual effort, in each and every existence. Even existence in the planes that appear to be pure pleasure, pure happiness, is included—in fact, existence in such planes requires the greatest effort. Out of all those who abandon sensual pleasures, who renounce the world and practise the Sublime States, making great sacrifices, hardly one in a hundred attains the Brahmā worlds. And very few people are inspired to work for the happiness of the Brahmā worlds. Even though they believe they exist, the effort required seems too hard, too difficult, and too painful. And suppose they do make the effort and manage to reach the *jhāna* states; maintaining them requires great care, constant effort. Otherwise, they can be lost very quickly, for what might seem to be a very insignificant cause.

In the Pāli texts there are examples that show this. There are men who retire to the forest and work to attain the special powers. If they develop these powers, they can even go through the air, thanks to the psychic powers of the fourth *jhāna*. But there are cases where simply hearing a woman's voice as she is singing is sufficient to make such men lose their powers, and they come down with a jolt. All the concentration, the *samādhi*, that they developed is lost in a moment for the slightest reason. The sound of a woman singing was enough for latent sensual desire to arise in them, and these

states cannot be maintained if there are impurities. So, working for this kind of worldly happiness is very difficult and very fragile.

Suffering that comes from impermanence includes the fact that at any time, any day, any minute, death can occur if the circumstances are favourable for it. The conditioned mind-body entities of men, Devas, and Brahmās are the real ills, for they are subject to all three sorts of suffering (*dukkha*).

We can divide suffering (*dukkha*) into eleven aspects: (1) the suffering of birth, (2) the suffering of decay, (3) of death, (4) sorrow, (5) lamentation, (6) the suffering of the body and (7) of the mind, (8) the suffering that is despair, (9) suffering that results from association with enemies, (10) from separation from loved ones, and (11) the suffering due to not getting what we want.

The suffering of birth means more than just being born as a human or Deva, etc. There is included here the more profound sense of the birth of the defilements, the birth or coming to be of actions—whether mental or verbal or physical—and there is the birth or the coming to be of effects. The defilements include greed, hatred, dullness, error, conceit, and so forth. The coming to be of effects, caused by past actions, includes diseases, ailments, and all the different kinds of painful feelings in the body.

When we sit here doing Vipassanā, the purity we have created with our concentration creates favourable conditions for the latent bad actions of the past to mature. The pain we feel is the result of our past actions. So all of us, I think, are getting very well acquainted with this aspect of suffering. Some students may feel depressed and say to themselves, if

there is all this pain, then I must be a very bad person. When that happens, we should remind ourselves that we have had countless lives before, and this pain doesn't come just from our actions in the present life. The very fact that the pain has entered the field of consciousness is a sign that there must be a degree of purity to draw it out. And as we progress in Vipassanā and know these pains to be impermanent, changing, we're gradually eliminating them.

If we work hard in this life, we won't need to worry about another aspect of the suffering due to impermanence, and by that I mean the possibility of being reborn in the lower worlds as animals, etc.

Among the defilements, greed is very fierce and violent. It will arise at any time it finds favourable circumstances, like a fire that is fed with gunpowder. When it's present it's very difficult to overcome it. It grows in volume in an instant. And greed isn't alone. There can be hatred, dullness, and so on, up to one thousand five hundred defilements, all of them very powerful. How fortunate we are to have this possibility to overcome them. With a few conscious breaths we can calm the mind and return to the important work of knowing *anicca* with a balanced mind, thereby eliminating the defilements.

A hill that is inhabited by a poisonous serpent is feared by everyone. No one will approach it. Similarly, existence as a human being or a Deva or Brahmā will be seen as undesirable by those who are established in the Dhamma.

The defilements all exist in connection with mental activity. And mental activity precedes physical actions, so the coming to be of actions is as fierce as the defilements. Just as people fear villages where thieves and robbers live, just as

honest people don't go near such villages, so also existence as a human being, Deva, or Brahmā is to be feared, and those bent on Deliverance don't dare approach such existences with thoughts such as, "This is me" or "This is my body."

So we see that every type of existence, whether it be as a human being, a Deva, or a Brahmā, is suffering, *dukkha*. Even moral actions that result in worldly happiness, in lives in the higher planes, even moral actions furnish food for the defilements, fuel for the flames of the defilements.

The suffering of decay and death can also be understood in a profound sense. There are momentary decays and deaths that follow a being from the moment of conception, and at all times they are ready to cause that being to fall into realms of suffering whenever circumstances permit.

Mental and physical suffering and despair are obvious *dukkha* and undesirable. They can occur at any moment for men, Devas, and Brahmās, and in some lower planes of existence they are constantly present.

Association with what one doesn't want includes coming in contact with persons, creatures, things, or objects that one wouldn't like to come into contact with or even see.

Separation from loved ones includes both persons and material possessions that one always wishes to be in contact with and with which one doesn't want to be parted, either in life or in death.

Suffering due to not getting what we want will result when we work hard, but in vain, trying to fulfil any one of our desires.

Of these eleven varieties of suffering, birth, decay and death are the most important. We can be constantly in touch with them in Vipassanā meditation. Each sensation takes birth, decays, and dies. So we can see that in working to know impermanence, *anicca*, we are working at the same time to know suffering, *dukkha*.

The Experience of Dr Wright

It is difficult to give a talk about suffering without sounding a little gloomy. Some people even have the mistaken impression that Buddhism is pessimistic. That is one reason I like to acquaint you with the examples of those who have tasted the happiness to be derived from meditation.

There was a black American working as a Cultural Attaché in the American Embassy in Yangon who was brought to the International Meditation Centre to work with Sayagyi and Sayamagyi in April 1957. He was friends with a Small Cause Court's judge in Myanmar. This judge had practised a different Buddhist meditation technique and even taught that technique to others. He had come to meditate at IMC-Yangon, and when Sayamagyi told him he would be sitting for one hour, he laughed. He was used to sitting without moving for twenty-two hours, he exclaimed. So he started, a little reluctant to be working under a woman's guidance, especially since he was a meditation teacher himself. But before the first hour was over he understood that he was now in contact with a very powerful technique. He couldn't sit as before, not even for one hour. And from that moment, he had deep respect for Sayamagyi.

So he encouraged Dr Wright, the black American, to meditate with Sayagyi and Sayamagyi. The judge was an old student, so he could come after work, meditate, spend the night, and in the morning go to his work. In that way he further encouraged Dr Wright.

Dr Wright had met many spiritual leaders in Myanmar before coming to the Centre, but this was his first meditation course. As usual, during the day, Sayamagyi was in charge as Sayagyi was at his office. One of the members of the executive committee of the Vipassanā Association, and also a member of the Vipassanā Research Society set up by Sayagyi, was at the Centre doing a course, so U Maung Maung Khin was able to translate for Sayamagyi and Dr Wright.

One day, Dr Wright was disturbed and requested U Maung Maung Khin to tell Sayamagyi. At the Centre in Yangon, the students meditate either in cells or in one of eight rooms around the pagoda, and the teachers sit on the raised platform in the centre of the pagoda. Dr Wright was in a cell on the side of the Bodhi tree, and Sayamagyi came and took her place in the centre.

Dr Wright explained that he was having trouble because when he closed his eyes, he saw the figure of an ogre that came face to face with him. Sayamagyi, thinking that he too might have difficulty accepting her advice, suggested he ask Sayagyi about this when he returned from his office. But Dr Wright told her, "I will take your word as coming from the authority. I will do exactly as you tell me to." So she simply said, "You must have clung to something that isn't conducive to your meditation."

Dr Wright took a small purse from Myanmar out of his pocket and started to hand it to her. “Don’t give it to me,” Sayamagyi said. “Maung Maung Khin should take it.”

Maung Maung Khin hesitated. He was a little concerned about coming into contact with the object. So Mother Sayamagyi insisted, explaining that if it affected her, there would be no one to teach, but if he took it, she would be able to give him protection. So Maung Maung Khin took it and put it under the pillow of Dr Wright’s friend.

Dr Wright felt pity for the ogre and wished to share merits with it. And he reported that it seemed as if a great storm blew away the ogre. Then he was able to meditate properly.

When the judge came back that evening, he was told about the incident and asked that the object be taken away from under his pillow. Sayagyi said, “Why not throw it away? You have seen its effect. Do you still feel the same attachment?” So Dr Wright threw it over the fence into an uninhabited plot of ground at the back of the Centre.

In fact, there was a sign at the Centre during Sayagyi’s time telling students to turn in to the manager any beads, strings, or other such objects. Sometimes, like Dr Wright, we have to learn the hard way the wisdom of such instructions.

After that incident, Dr Wright saw in his mind’s eye a vision of Sayagyi who was very big, with a Buddha beside him, and to the side, he saw a very small black figure, and Dr Wright took the figure to be himself—“looking like a monkey jumping around,” he said.

When he did Vipassanā, Dr Wright did very well. At that time, the lower meditation cells were being constructed. They

were pouring concrete not five feet from his cell, which was on the opposite side of the pagoda from the one in which he worked on Ānāpāna. And when he meditated, he could remain for an hour and a half without hearing the vibrator.

Dr Wright went back to America, and in 1963 Sayagyi sent him a letter authorizing him to teach Ānāpāna. He was the first person to be authorized to teach outside Myanmar. The letter was presented to him in a public ceremony at the Myanmar Embassy in Washington, D.C., given by the Myanmar Ambassador. Dr Wright reported that within three years he had preached to 10,000 people: college men and women, and Congregational ministers like himself.

Sayagyi liked to tell the story of the time the secretary of the Pali Text Society of England came to the Centre in Yangon. When she learned that an American professor of religion who had never studied the Pāli texts was lecturing on Buddhism, she asked how this was possible. Sayagyi told her that he knew the Buddha-Dhamma from personal experience. And he added that Sayamagyi, too, had never studied the texts seriously, and yet she can answer any question put to her, not only by laymen but also by learned bhikkhus. She could answer from what she knows personally, from her own experience. When you answer from experience, how can you be wrong?

DAY SIX: EVENING DISCOURSE

Straighten Your Fickle Mind

Phandanam capalam cittam dūrakkham dunnivārayam
Ujum karoti medhāvī usukāro va tejanam.
Vārijo va thale khitto okamokata ubbhato
Pariphandati 'dam cittam Māradheyayam pahātave.

The wise man makes straight his unsteady, fickle thoughts
so difficult to guard, difficult to control, like the fletcher
making straight his arrow.

Thoughts which are striving to shake off the power of
Māra writhe and quiver like a fish thrown upon dry land.

Dhammapada vv. 33-34

The Importance of Following the Teacher's Advice¹

The Buddha gave these teachings when he was staying on the Cālikā mountain, with reference to Elder Meghiya. Meghiya was the eighth bhikkhu to serve as the Buddha's attendant. And following him, the Buddha's cousin, Ānanda, served as his attendant for the rest of his life, discharging his duties with distinction.

On one occasion, when Meghiya was still his attendant, Meghiya came back from his alms round and went to the bank of the river Kimilālā, near Jaṇṭugāma. There, he saw a mango grove and thought to himself that it would be a nice place for

¹The *Gradual Sayings* IV 234-237 (we include the repeated section of the discourses from IV 231-233).

him to meditate. He returned to the Buddha and requested permission to go to the mango grove to meditate.

“Wait for a while, Meghiya,” the Buddha answered. “Wait until some other bhikkhu arrives. I am alone.”

But Meghiya requested the same thing three times. Finally the Buddha said, “What can I say as you talk of putting forth effort over and over again? Do as you please, Meghiya.”

So Meghiya left the Buddha alone and went to the mango grove. As he meditated, three types of unwholesome thoughts occurred to him: he had sensuous thoughts, malicious thoughts, and cruel thoughts.

Meghiya thought to himself, “This is very strange. I renounced the world with faith so why should I be assailed by these evil, unwholesome thoughts?” And he returned to the Buddha and reported to him, “Lord, as I was staying in the mango grove, meditating, three sorts of unwholesome thoughts occurred to me: sensuous thoughts, malicious thoughts, and cruel thoughts.”

Now it happens that Meghiya in a past life had been a king residing in that mango grove, and it’s because he had a harem that his mind was assailed by sensuous thoughts; and as the king had given orders to execute criminals, this resulted in cruel thoughts, full of hatred, assailing him. The Buddha reminded him that he had discouraged him from going to the grove but that he had insisted on acting impetuously.

The First Condition Conducive to Emancipation: The Good Friend

Then the Buddha pronounced the verses we have quoted, and followed them with a discourse. In it he instructed

Meghiya concerning the five conditions which are conducive to the emancipation of the mind (*ceto-vimutti*): (1) the good friend, (2) a moral life, (3) listening to the Teachings, (4) practising the Teachings or Dhamma, and, finally, (5) the attainment of insight, wisdom.

A good friend is one who has right speech, in whose presence one hears what hasn't been heard, corrects what has already been heard, gets rid of doubt, sets one's views straight, and who helps one to gain confidence. Or, it's someone who trains us in faith, morality, learning, generosity, and understanding. The best of friends, of course, is the Buddha himself. As he said, "It is because I am a good friend that living beings who are subject to birth are able to free themselves from birth." The Buddha may not be able to do our meditation for us, but it's due to him that we are able to learn how to work, and it's due to him and those who work in accordance with his Teachings that we can have the protection and guidance necessary for making progress. I have already given you the passage from *The Path of Purification* concerning the teacher of meditation as the good friend, and who the best person to go to is, starting with the Buddha and working down to "a teacher who knows the texts, guards the heritage, protects the tradition and who follows the teachers' opinion rather than his own."¹

¹*The Path of Purification*, Chap. III, ¶ 64.

The Story of Jotipāla¹

The Buddha himself had a good friend in one of his past lives who aided him. In that life, his name was Jotipāla, and it was during the time of his predecessor, the Buddha Kassapa. Jotipāla was to receive his final sure prediction (*niyatavi-varaṇa*) from Buddha Kassapa. His friend, Ghaṭikāra, suggested they visit the Buddha, but Jotipāla answered, “Who wants to meet a shaven-headed bhikkhu!” And due to the unwholesome mental volition accompanying that negative remark, when he was the Bodhisatta Siddhattha, he had to work for six years in order to attain Awakening. If he hadn’t said that, it would have been much quicker.

Jotipāla’s friend decided to make him be reasonable, even if it meant being rough with him. So when they were bathing in the river, he grabbed Jotipāla by the hair and threatened to drown him if he refused to go see the Buddha Kassapa. And that worked.

The Story of Devadatta and Ajātasattu²

The wrong kind of friend can mean great suffering for us. The Buddha’s cousin Devadatta was a bhikkhu who at first worked very hard, and although he didn’t attain any fruition states, he did develop the *jhānas*. He was such a good

¹*Middle Length Sayings* IV 243-246. For this and other occasions in past lives when the Bodhisatta did deeds he had to suffer for in his last life as a Buddha, see the translation of the Apadāna verses in *The Udāna Commentary* 633–635 and the notes on pp. 713–722.

²For references concerning Devadatta, see *The Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, I 1106-11. For Ajātasattu’s visit to the Buddha, see *Dialogues of the Buddha*, I 65-95.

bhikkhu that one of the chief disciples, Venerable Sāriputta, praised him highly. But ambition got the best of him, and he decided he wanted to be head of the Community of Bhikkhus. He saw the Buddha as if he were the president of the Saṅgha and thought it was a role that could be passed on to someone else. When the Buddha refused to make Devadatta head of the Saṅgha, he decided to take over by force.

Devadatta was friends with Prince Ajātasattu, the son of King Bimbisāra, and told the prince to kill his father and take over the throne and that he, Devadatta, would kill the Buddha and take over the Saṅgha. He couldn't kill the Buddha, though he tried several means, including rolling a huge rock down on the Buddha, sending a wild elephant against him, and sending archers to shoot him. But Ajātasattu did manage to kill his father.

Now patricide is one of the five major crimes that inevitably means rebirth in the very next life in the lowest of hells where one will remain for an incredibly long time. So because of his friend, Ajātasattu suffers greatly.

But of course Ajātasattu's suffering didn't wait for the next life to begin. His conscience wasn't clear. One evening on the full moon day, after he was king, Ajātasattu went to see the Buddha, and on arriving at the mango grove where the Buddha was sitting with many bhikkhus meditating, he was worried because there was no sound. He thought it meant there was a plot against him. And when he listened to the Buddha's sermon he couldn't concentrate on it properly as his worries distracted him. After he left, the Buddha told the bhikkhus that if Ajātasattu hadn't killed his father, that sermon would have been sufficient to make him a Sotāpanna.

The Second Condition: Morality

So we come to the second quality that is conducive to liberating the mind: morality. If one is a bhikkhu, there are the rules laid down by the Buddha to guide the Saṅgha (the Pāṭimokkha). A bhikkhu or bhikkhunī should see the danger involved in committing the least offence. And we, as laymen, can develop this appreciation of the importance of keeping the five precepts permanently and the eight precepts on special days or when we are doing a meditation course.

The Third Condition: Listening to the Doctrine

Listening to discourses concerning the Buddha's Teachings is the third quality preparing us for liberation. The Buddha told the demon Ālavaka that listening to discourses on the Dhamma was the way to acquire wisdom.¹ This we can understand as including reading books on the Dhamma as well. We can acquire a good theoretical knowledge, as this will inspire us to work and will help us work better. At times, listening to a talk or reading can help us understand experiences we have already had. Sometimes, you may find that a particular talk will seem boring. Then later, after you've worked and gained experience, the same talk will suddenly come to life. What seemed to be only dull theories you will realize to be very real.

We can include here as well Right Speech. The Buddha told Meghiya that there were ten sorts of speech that are suitable for releasing the meditative mind—talk that will greatly reduce the defilements and be conducive to a decisive turning

¹*The Group of Discourses*, 30f., and *The Kindred Sayings* I 275-278.

away from infatuation with the world and lead to detachment, to complete cessation, to peace of mind, to higher wisdom, and finally to Full Awakening, Nibbāna.

When we talked about Right Speech as part of the Noble Eightfold Path, we mentioned many types of speech to be avoided. Here we can look at the more positive side of Right Speech.

The Buddha recommended (1) talk about desiring little; (2) talk about contentment; (3) talk about solitude, which can be physical or mental solitude and the highest solitude, Nibbāna; (4) talk about remaining aloof, which includes talk about abstaining from voluptuous association with women, a very important point for bhikkhus. This includes talk about their beauty, which results in sensuous desires; or looking at them; having conversation with them; eating together with them; or having physical contact with them, as all these are conducive to arousing sensuous desires, and all of these are against the bhikkhus' rules. Talk about remaining aloof for the bhikkhus includes as well talk about abstaining from any improper association with laymen. Then there is (5) talk about making the right effort; (6) talk about morality; (7) talk about *samādhi*, concentration; (8) talk about *paññā*, wisdom, understanding; (9) talk about deliverance (*vimutti*), meaning talk about the fruition states of Nibbāna (*ariya-phala*); and finally, (10) talk about knowledge and vision of deliverance (*vimutti-ñāṇa-dassana*), meaning Retrospective Knowledge (*paccavekkhaṇa-ñāṇa*). Retrospective knowledge comes just after attaining an absorption state or one of the paths or fruition states in the four stages of Awakening. After a fruition state, for example, the meditator sees in retrospect the path,

the fruition, the abandoned defilements, the remaining defilements, if any, and the meditator sees in retrospect Nibbāna.

The Fourth Condition: Practising the Dhamma

The fourth quality conducive to liberating the mind is the practice of the Dhamma. This of course means working for concentration through meditation. The meditator should put forth effort and work resolutely to eliminate all unwholesome states and to acquire wholesome states. He should be firm in his effort and shouldn't put aside the practice of wholesome acts. The Buddha said that only the energetic can obtain deliverance from suffering. Success comes only after repeatedly trying.

The Fifth Condition: Insight

Finally, there is the fifth quality of liberating the mind, and this is Insight, Wisdom, actually understanding the true nature of reality. This can only come through Vipassanā. Only Vipassanā gives the wisdom that leads to the discernment of the arising and vanishing of phenomena. Only Vipassanā destroys the defilements. Only Vipassanā leads to the complete and final cessation of suffering, to Nibbāna.

The Buddha made this very clear to Meghiya by saying that he should complete the development of these qualities by (1) contemplating the loathsomeness of the body in order to eradicate passion (*rāga*)—this is especially important to bhikkhus who must confront sensual desires and dominate them more thoroughly than lay people. (2) He should contemplate on Loving-kindness (*mettā*) and develop it in order to

eradicate ill will (*vyāpāda*). (3) Then the meditator should work on mindfulness of in-breaths and out-breaths in order to suppress thought-conception (*vitakka*), that is, laying hold of a thought, giving a thought attention. (4) The meditator should contemplate the characteristic of impermanence (*anicca*) in order to eradicate the conceit of “I am” (*asmi-māna*). “Meghiya,” the Buddha said, “he who realizes the characteristic of impermanence, *anicca*, realizes the characteristic of *anattā* automatically. He who realizes the characteristic of the lack of self eradicates the concept ‘I am’ and attains Nibbāna in this very life.”

At the conclusion of his discourse the Buddha gave the stanza we quoted at the beginning:

The wise man makes straight his unsteady, fickle thoughts
so difficult to guard, difficult to control, like the fletcher
making straight his arrow.

Thoughts which are striving to shake off the power of
Māra writhe and quiver like a fish thrown upon dry
land.

Dhammapada vv. 33-34

How do we measure up to the Buddha’s advice to Meghiya? Here, we are associating with good friends, working as the Buddha would want them to work. We are developing morality, we listen to talks on the Dhamma, we practise development of concentration, and we are developing insight. So we deserve five out of five.

No-self (*anattā*)

Now let us look in more detail at the third characteristic of conditioned states, *anattā*, Not-self, Non-ego, lack of an eternal self, the uncontrollable aspect. In the ultimate sense, no self-sufficient ego or soul, no abiding substance is to be found in the physical and mental phenomena of existence or outside them. This is the central doctrine of Buddhism. Unless this is understood there is no real knowledge of Buddhism. Without this understanding, we will think our personality is experiencing suffering, that our personality performs good and evil actions and will experience the results of those acts, that our personality will enter Nibbāna, that our personality walks on the Noble Eightfold Path.¹

In Pāli, the word *anattā* is made up of *an*, designating a negation, and *atta*, which in the ordinary sense means essence or substantiality. The Buddha explained that there are two levels of language.² There is conventional language, which we use when we talk in everyday life, and there is language which conforms to Ultimate Truth. This second type of language is very rigorous, as it must be very precise and accurate. This is the language used in the third part of the Pāli texts, the Abhidhamma, which can be translated as Ultimate Truth. We won't find mention of persons in those texts, but rather "a process of physical and mental phenomena." Many of the texts in the Suttas, or the collection of the discourses, also use this sort of language that deals only with ultimates. But the Buddha taught the truth using conventional language as well, and he

¹See Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary*, s.v. *anatta*.

²See, for example, *Dialogues*, I 263.

explained carefully that one shouldn't misunderstand him when he spoke. It would have been very inconvenient to give a talk to ordinary people saying, "this process of physical and mental phenomena" rather than "I." But the Buddha said that whenever he used words like "I," "me," or "mine," there was no mistaken idea in his mind that any controlling, permanent self existed.

As with the assembly of parts
The word "chariot" is countenanced,
So, when the aggregates are present,
"A being" is said in common usage.

Saṃyutta Nikāya, I 135.¹

Ashin Buddhaghosa points out that when component parts such as axles, wheels, frame poles, etc., are assembled, there is something we call a chariot.² In the ultimate sense, however, no one of the parts is the chariot. When various materials enclose a space in the right way, we say there's a house. When the fingers and thumb are placed in a certain way, we say there's a fist. In the same way, when the five aggregates of material form, sensations, perception, mental formations, and consciousness come together, we speak in common usage of "a being" or "a person." But in the ultimate sense, if each component is examined separately, there is no basis for the assumption "I am" or "I."

Venerable Ledi Sayadaw points out that insight knowledge into No-self (*anattā*) is essential in order to dispel the erro-

¹We use the translation of Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Path of Purification*, Chapter XVIII, ¶ 25.

²*The Path of Purification*, Chapter XVIII, ¶ 28.

neous belief in an eternal soul.¹ If we are to do this, it's necessary to develop insight knowledge into impermanence (*anicca*) because once there is a good appreciation of impermanence, it's easy to acquire insight into No-self. Insight knowledge into suffering (*dukkha*) isn't fully acquired until later, and that's why there are four stages in the attaining of liberation, since subtle craving and conceit remain until the last stage of Arahatsip is reached.

It's essential that people today, who've encountered a period when a Buddha's Teachings are available, work to escape from rebirth in the lower realms of suffering. It isn't possible to work for this when a Buddha's Teachings are not encountered. Thus, we should strive to contemplate or meditate on the impermanence of things in order to fulfil insight knowledge of No-self.

The main thing for us to work on is maturity of knowledge. If our knowledge is ripe, it's possible to attain insight into impermanence while listening to a discourse or while living the householder's ordinary life.

"To him whose knowledge is developed," Ven. Ledi Sayadaw continues, "everything within and without oneself, within and without one's house, within and without one's village or town, is an object at the sight of which the insight of impermanence may spring up and develop." It isn't necessary for us to consider the momentary deaths which occur innumerable times during a blink of the eye by studying the texts of the Abhidhamma. Through meditation, we can experience

¹Ledi Sayadaw, *Manual of Insight* (The Wheel 31/32, pp. 77-80) and *Manuals of Buddhism*, pp. 29f.

radical change and subsequent change taking place in our own bodies. They can be evident to, and personally experienced by, every living person.

The truth of *anattā* is fundamental to Buddhism, and it's also the most difficult part of the Teachings to understand. Even if we have a clear theoretical understanding, we still think and act with the thought of "I," "me," "mine." Only when we understand through *anicca* the rapid rise and fall of all physical and mental phenomena do we truly understand *anattā*.

It isn't necessary for us to try to force ourselves to believe this before we know it through our own experience. If we should try to force ourselves to believe, it would only create conflict and make it more difficult to work. That's why we quoted Sayagyi U Ba Khin, who said that no one who worked under his guidance was expected to believe in what he said. "When you see, then you will believe," he said.

On Belief, The Discourse to the Kālāmas

In the Buddha's time, a group of laymen asked the Buddha how to know what to believe. Let us look in more detail at this story, found in the Kesaputtiya Sutta.¹ The Buddha was going around the districts of the kingdom of Kosala with a large following of bhikkhus. They went to the town of Kesaputta, the market town of the Kālāmas. The Kālāmas had heard of the Buddha—that he was Fully Awakened, a teaching Buddha, endowed with knowledge and perfect conduct, a Perfect One, the Knower of the World,

¹*The Gradual Sayings* I 170-175.

unexcelled tamer of men, the teacher of men, Devas and Brahmās, the Awakened One, the Glorious One. He had realized himself the Ultimate Truth, and he had made known this world together with the worlds of Devas, Māras and Brahmās, together with the communities of the bhikkhus and Brahmans, gods and men. He was preaching the Dhamma, good in the beginning, good in the middle and good in the end—rich in meaning. He taught the higher practice which is perfect, complete and pure. Such was the reputation of the Buddha.

So the Kālāmas went to the Buddha, hoping he would be able to clarify a question for them. “Lord,” they said, “there are bhikkhus and Brahmans who come to Kesaputta. They expound and explain their own views and they cast aspersions on the views of others, despising them and treating them with contempt. Then other bhikkhus and Brahmans come, teaching their views and casting aspersions on the views of others. So we have doubts about these views, we are uncertain about them. Who speaks the truth and who speaks falsehood?”

The Buddha answered that they had good cause to have doubts. “Come, Kālāmas,” he said. “Don’t accept views from hearsay, from what you have been told, because it’s mentioned in the scriptures, through logical reasoning, through weighing evidence, or because you like a view after having pondered about it, or because someone else’s reasoning seems plausible, or because you think, ‘This bhikkhu is our teacher.’ Kālāmas, when you know through your own experience, ‘These ideas are unprofitable, faulty, censured by the wise, and they lead to harm and suffering,’ then you should reject them.”

And through questions and answers, he pointed out to the Kālāmas that when greed arises in a person, it will harm him. When a person filled with greed is overcome and his mind obsessed to such a degree that he kills sentient beings, steals, commits adultery, tells lies and urges others to do such acts, it will lead to harm and suffering for a long time. A person who commits such acts out of hatred will likewise suffer for a long time for that. If wrong actions result because of ignorance, the results are the same.

So we can see that the Buddha isn't telling the Kālāmas to go on doubting once they have seen clearly. In the modern world, it can become fashionable to doubt, even after we have learned something.

Next, the Buddha pointed out to the Kālāmas that when greed was absent, a person won't take life, steal, commit adultery, tell lies, and he won't tell others to do so. This would be good for him. And we should accept things like this that we realize ourselves are good, faultless, praised by the wise, and which, when practised and observed, lead to good and happiness. Things such as these we should acquire and live with. So, when greed is absent, when ill will is absent, when delusion is absent, good deeds and good results from those deeds will come about.

Then the Buddha taught the Kālāmas the four practices that lead to the Brahmā abodes, the *Brahma-vihāra*. We explained these the other day: Loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karunā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). The Buddha instructed the Kālāmas thus, "A man should live pervading the whole world, above, below, across, all around in all directions with thoughts attended by

equanimity—abundant, exalted, measureless, without hostility or malevolence.”

This practice can give good results no matter what we believe. It can lead to rebirth in one of the higher worlds in a state of bliss. If there is no other world, and if cause and effect do not exist, then our present life will be happy, as we will be free from enmity, malice, and suffering. If evil comes to those who do evil deeds, then one is assured of happiness as one has done good deeds. If evil doesn't result from evil deeds, even so, if one hasn't done evil, one will be happy.

The Kālāmas were able to understand the Buddha's discourse to them, and the truth was so clear to them that they took the Triple Refuge. We can surmise that the Buddha saw that they were not yet ready to practise insight meditation, for he doesn't mention it in his discourse, and from other talks, we know that the four *Brahma-vihāras* prepare us for insight meditation. This is no doubt because the Buddha was able to see what his listeners were able to understand and always suited his discourse to his listeners.

DAY SEVEN: MORNING DISCOURSE

The Path of Purification

“Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā” ti yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindatī dukkhe, esa maggo visuddhiyā.

“Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā” ti yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindatī dukkhe, esa maggo visuddhiyā.

“Sabbe dhammā anattā” ti yadā paññāya passati
Atha nibbindatī dukkhe, esa maggo visuddhiyā.

“All conditioned states are impermanent.”

When one discovers this through one’s own wisdom,
One is repulsed by this suffering.

This is the path to purity.

“All conditioned states are unsatisfactory.”

When one discovers this through one’s own wisdom,
One is repulsed by this suffering.

This is the path to purity.

“All states, conditioned or unconditioned, are without a
controlling, enduring self.”

When one discovers this through one’s own wisdom,
One is repulsed by this suffering.

This is the path to purity.

Dhammapada vv. 277-279

The whole teaching is based on emancipation. The Buddha said, “Just as the ocean has only one taste—the taste of salt—

the Teaching has only one taste—the taste of Emancipation.”¹

The goal is the attainment of the Paths of the four stages of Awakening and their Fruition States (*magga-phala*), and through them, final Nibbāna. These cannot be obtained without the practice of Vipassanā-bhāvanā, Insight Meditation. This is made clear in many places in the texts. For example, here is a verse from the Dhammapada (v. 276):

*Tumhehi kiccam ātappam, akkhātāro Tathāgatā.
Paṭipannā pamokkhanti jhāyino Mārabhandhanā.*

You must make the effort yourself. The Perfect Ones [the Buddhas] are [only] teachers. Meditators who have entered [the Path] are released from the bonds of death (Māra).

Let us look at the discourse of the Buddha that is most relevant to this verse.² The Buddha gave this discourse while residing at Sāvathī in the Jetavana Grove monastery given by the layman Anāthapiṇḍika. He told the bhikkhus that there is no possibility, no cause or reason, for one who regards any conditioned phenomenon as being permanent (*nicca*) to be filled with insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). Without insight knowledge it's impossible to enter the Path of Assurance (*sammatta-niyāma*). And without entering the Path of Assurance, it's impossible to realize the four stages of Awakening that culminate in full Awakening: the stages of Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi, and Arahat. So you see that even after having tasted Nibbāna, there is still work to be done, still graduated steps to climb.

¹*The Gradual Sayings*, IV 139.

²*The Path of Discrimination*, pp. 401-404.

One who realizes that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent (*anicca*), however, has the possibility, has cause and reason, to be filled with insight knowledge, to enter the Path of Assurance, and to realize the fruition states of the four stages of Awakening.

In the same way, if one considers conditioned phenomena as being happiness (*sukha*), as being self (*atta*), it's impossible to successfully complete the training. But if one considers conditioned phenomena as unsatisfactory (*dukkha*) and without self (*anattā*), it's possible to complete the training.

Finally, if Nibbāna is considered to be unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), there is no possibility, no cause or reason for one to be filled with insight knowledge, to enter the Path of Assurance, and to attain the fruition states of the four stages of Awakening. Only if Nibbāna is seen as happiness (*sukha*) is it possible to fulfil the training. The happiness of Nibbāna, of course, isn't the same as the happiness of the everyday world of conditioned phenomena.

How are we to realize that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and without self? You will remember that these three characteristics are intimately connected one to the other. If one is understood, the others will be understood as well. So, we can begin by striving to realize just one of the three. True understanding means direct understanding, first-hand understanding. Experiencing the truth of one of these three characteristics will prove to be very different from accepting theories about it. Theories and opinions are too easily modified, changed, distorted, proven to be wrong, or badly understood. Direct experience will give us the type of

knowledge that stays with us. We won't have doubts about what we have proven ourselves.

The Buddha said that when he spoke of understanding the world, he was talking about understanding oneself, the mind-body entity. If we understand ourselves, we understand the world. Not in the sense that we and the world are one, but in the sense that the law of ultimate reality governs how our mind and body function, and that law governs how all material and mental states in the conditioned world function. If we can see the law as it operates in us, we will understand its functioning outside ourselves. But we must *know* it, not just know *about* it. We can watch others swim, study techniques for learning to swim, but unless we enter the water and actually swim, we will never know how.

So we will be striving to know changes as they take place in our sensations. This will be the key that will open the door of direct knowledge, insight knowledge, for us.

Awareness of Impermanence

Sayagyi U Ba Khin's advice to us is to keep knowing change, *anicca*, as continuously as possible.¹ The Buddha's advice to the bhikkhus is that they should try to maintain the awareness of *anicca* or *dukkha* or *anattā* in all postures, whether sitting, standing, walking, or lying down. This depends, of course, on which of the three characteristics serves as the subject of meditation, and in our case, we should work to know *anicca* every moment. The continuity of aware-

¹The following discussion is based on "The Essentials of Buddha-Dhamma in Practice," *Dhamma Texts*, pp. 89-98

ness of *anicca*, which will lead to the realization of *dukkha* and *anattā* as well, is the secret of success. The final words of the Buddha, just before he breathed his last and passed into Mahā-parinibbāna were, “Decay or *anicca* is inherent in all component things. Work out your own salvation with diligence.”¹

In fact, this is the essence of all his teachings during the forty-five years of his Buddhahood. If you keep the awareness of *anicca*, which is inherent in all component things, you are sure to reach the goal in due time.

Meanwhile, your insight into what is true of nature will become greater and greater as you develop your understanding of *anicca*. Eventually, it will develop to such an extent that you will have no doubt whatsoever of the three characteristics: *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā*. Only then will you be in a position to go ahead towards the goal in view.

Now that you know that *anicca* is the first essential factor, you should try to understand what *anicca* is with real clarity and as extensively as possible—in order not to get confused as you practise or through discussions.

The real meaning of *anicca* is impermanence or decay—that is to say, the inherent nature of impermanence or decay in everything that exists in the universe, whether animate or inanimate.

Kalāpas

In explaining the theory of *anicca*, the Buddha started with the behaviour of matter, and matter as known to the Buddha is very much smaller than the atom which science of today has

¹*Dialogues of the Buddha*, II 173.

discovered. Everything that exists in the universe, both animate and inanimate, is composed of *kalāpas*, each dying out simultaneously as it becomes. We have already explained that the *kalāpas* are a brief coming together of the four predominant material qualities and the four subsidiary qualities dependent on them. The life span of a *kalāpa* is a moment, there being a trillion such moments in the wink of an eye of a human being. They are all in a state of perpetual change or flux. To a developed student in Vipassanā meditation, they can be felt as a stream of energy. The human body has no substance, even though it seems to; it's rather a continuum of an aggregate of matter (*rūpa*) with the life force (*nāma*) coexisting.

When we know that our body is composed of tiny *kalāpas*, all in a state of change, we will know the true nature of change or decay. Change and decay result from the continual breakdown and replacement of *kalāpas*, all in a state of combustion, and this must necessarily be identified with *dukkha*, the truth of suffering. Only when you have experienced impermanence as suffering will you come to a realization of the truth of suffering—the first of the Four Noble Truths on which so much emphasis has been laid in the teachings of the Buddha. Why? Because once you realize the subtle nature of *dukkha*, and that as a conditioned being you cannot escape from it even for a moment, you will become truly afraid of, disgusted with, disinclined to your state of existence and look for a way to escape to a state beyond suffering. It is possible to know that state and to have a taste of it, even as a human being. This happens when one reaches the first stage of Awakening, Sotāpatti (also called Sotāpanna). Then you will be developed well enough to go into the

unconditioned state, the state of Nibbāna, the state of peace within.

But positive results will be seen much sooner. As soon as you are able to keep up the awareness of *anicca* in your everyday life, you will know for yourself that a change is taking place in you, both physically and mentally, for the better.

Here your attention is primarily on the changing nature of matter, the sensations in the body. At times, the attention will only be on the changes of the sensations. At other times, your attention will be on the changing nature of the thought elements of attention projected towards the process of change in the sensations. When you are contemplating the change of matter, you realize also that the thought-elements arising simultaneously with that awareness are also in a state of transition or change. In that case, you are being aware of *anicca* in both mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*).

It is possible to develop the understanding of *anicca* through any of the six organs of sense: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind. In practice, however, we have found that of all the types of sensations or feelings, the sensations arising through contact of touch with the component parts of the body cover a wide area for introspective meditation. Not only is the surface larger, but the sensations are more tangible. These sensations, of course, result from the friction, radiation and vibration of the *kalāpas* within the body, and they are constantly changing. A beginner in Vipassanā meditation can come to the understanding of *anicca* more easily through body feelings. Anyone is free to try other means, but we suggest that you should be well established in the understanding of

anicca through body sensations before any attempt is made through the other senses.

The Ten Levels of Insight Knowledge

There are ten levels of knowledge or realization in Vipassanā.¹ The first step is theoretical knowledge, and these talks can help us with that, or we can read books. But all nine of the remaining steps can only be reached through true Buddhist meditation with the aid of a competent teacher.

- (1) The first step, then, is an appreciation of *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā* by close observation and analysis (*sammasana*).
- (2) The second step is the knowledge of the arising and dissolution of matter and mind (*rūpa* and *nāma*). Whenever we experience the changes taking place in our sensations, we are on this level (*udayabbaya*).
- (3) The third stage is the knowledge of the rapid changing nature of mind and matter. It's experienced as a swift flow of current or a flash of energy. The decay aspect, or breaking up of the *kalāpas*, is most prominent at this stage (*bhaṅga*).
- (4) As all aspects of our mind and body are experienced as insubstantial, there arises the knowledge that this very existence is dreadful (*baya*).
- (5) We know that this very existence is full of evils (*ādīnava*).

¹The ten are given in Venerable Anuruddha's *Compendium of Philosophy*, pp. 210f. (See also U Shwe Zan Aung's introductory essay to the translation, pp. 65f.)

(6) We know that this very existence is disgusting (*nibbidā*).

So we see that three out of ten steps are devoted to seeing the negative aspects of conditioned existence. Our attachment is so strong it takes a very strong dose of medicine to cure us of this illness of conditioned existence.

The last four levels or stages towards Awakening concern the effort to be put forth:

(7) We know there's an urgent need to escape from this very existence (*muccitu-kamyatā*).

(8) We know that the time has come to work with full realization for liberation, using *anicca* as the base (*paṭisaṅkhā*).

(9) We know the stage is now set for us to detach ourselves from all formations (*saṅkhāra*) and to break away from ego-centredness (*saṅkhārupekkhā*).

(10) And lastly, we gain the knowledge that will accelerate the attempt to reach the goal (*anuloma*).

Those who reach the goal in a short time will know these ten steps only in retrospect. As you progress in your understanding of *anicca*, you will get through these ten levels of attainment—subject, however, to adjustments or help at certain levels by a competent teacher. You should avoid looking forward to any attainment, as anticipating them will distract you from the continuity of awareness of *anicca*. Only this constant awareness can and will give you the desired goal.

Meditation as Laymen

Not all of you will reach the final goal in a short time, however. So let us look at the way to work and benefit as laymen, here and now. First we must activate the *anicca* in

ourselves—experience our inner selves in *anicca*, and this will eventually bring us to a state of inner and outer calm and balance. Being engrossed in the feeling of *anicca* within will achieve this.

Today, with the world facing serious problems, many of which threaten mankind, the time is ripe for everyone to take to Vipassanā meditation and learn how to find a deep pool of quiet in the midst of all that is happening. *Anicca* is inside everyone. It is within the reach of everyone. Feel *anicca*, experience *anicca*, become engrossed in *anicca*, and it will be possible to cut away from the world of ideation outside. *Anicca* will be the gem of life which you will treasure to create a reservoir of calm and balanced energy for your own well-being and for the welfare of society.

When *anicca* is properly developed, it strikes at the root of your physical and mental ills and gradually removes whatever is bad in you—the sources of your physical and mental ills.

During the Buddha's lifetime there were around nineteen million people in Sāvatti and the neighbouring countryside. About fifteen million of those people were Ariyas who had reached the first stage of Awakening.¹ The number of laymen who took to Vipassanā must have been more. *Anicca* isn't reserved for men who have renounced the world. It is for the householder as well. Despite the drawbacks that make a layman restless these days, a competent teacher or guide can help a student get *anicca* activated in a comparatively short time. Once it's activated, he will only need to try and preserve it. But he must make a point of working for the third level of

¹See *Buddhist Legends*, I 147.

Vipassanā knowledge whenever the opportunity presents itself. This is the stage with the knowledge of the rapid changing nature of matter and mind (*bhaṅga*). If you reach this level, there will be little or no problem, because you should then be able to experience *anicca* without much effort, almost automatically.

In this case, *anicca* will become your base to which you can return as soon as the domestic needs of daily life are over. There is likely, however, to be some difficulty for you if you haven't reached the stage of *bhaṅga* yet. It will be just like a tug of war for you between the *anicca* within and the physical and mental activities outside the body. So, it would be wise for you to follow the motto of "Work while you work; play while you play." You won't need to be activating *anicca* all the time. It should suffice if you confine this to the regular period or periods set aside in the day and night for this purpose. During this time at least, an attempt must be made to keep the mind and attention inside the body with the awareness exclusively of *anicca*. Your awareness of *anicca* should be from moment to moment—so continuous that you don't allow the interpolation of any discursive or distracting thoughts which are definitely detrimental to progress.

If this isn't possible, you will have to go back to mindfulness of your breath, because *samādhi* is the key to *anicca*. And for good *samādhi*, *sīla* has to be perfect, since *samādhi* is built on *sīla*. For good *anicca*, *samādhi* must be good. If *samādhi* is excellent, awareness of *anicca* will also become excellent.

There's no special technique for activating *anicca* other than the use of the mind set to a perfect state of balance and

attention projected to the object of meditation. In Vipassanā the object of meditation is *anicca*. Therefore, if you're used to drawing back your attention to body sensations, you'll be able to feel *anicca* directly. You should first experience *anicca* on or in the body in the area where you can easily fix your attention, changing the area of attention from place to place, from head to feet and from feet to head. At times you should probe into the interior. No attention is to be paid to the anatomy of the body. Direct attention is given to the formation of matter (*kalāpas*) and the nature of their constant change.

If these instructions are observed, there will surely be progress, but the progress depends also on past perfections (*pāramī*) and your devotion to the work of meditation. If you attain high levels of knowledge, your power to understand the three characteristics of *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā* will increase, and you will accordingly come nearer and nearer to the goal of Ariya, one who has tasted Nibbāna. You must keep the goal in view.

The Three Erroneous Ways of Observing

Now let us look at a discussion of two aspects of misunderstanding. This is a text on the three erroneous ways of observing (*vipallāsa*) and the three types of erroneous thought

(*maññanā*)¹ found in *The Exposition of Insight*, written by the venerable bhikkhu from Myanmar, Ledi Sayadaw.²

The Pāli word *vipallāsa* means hallucination, delusion, erroneous observation, or taking that which is true as being false and that which is false as being true.

Erroneous observations can be of three sorts: erroneous observations (1) pertaining to perception; (2) pertaining to thought; and (3) pertaining to views or beliefs. The erroneous observation through perception can wrongly perceive something that is impermanent as being permanent, something impure as pure, ill as good, and lack of self as having self. Thoughts and views can also be subject to these four aspects of erroneous observation. They can be summed up by: “This is mine. This is my self, my living soul.”

We can give three similes to illustrate the three erroneous observations through perceptions, thoughts, and views.

Erroneous Observation through Perception. There is a farmer who has a rice field near a forest. When he is away, deer come and eat the young sprouts. So the farmer bundles some straw into the shape of a man and sets it up in the middle of the field. He ties it to look like it has a body with a head, hands, and legs. And he paints on a face. He covers the straw with old clothes and puts a bow and arrow in the hands. Then, when the deer come to eat the plants, they see

¹The English translation of Ven. Ledi Sayadaw’s texts uses the terms “hallucinations” (*vipallāsa*) and “fantasy” (*maññanā*). Following a suggestion made by Dr Kedar Dwivedi, we have used translations that are closer to modern psychological terminology.

²Published as “The Manual of Insight” in *The Wheel*, 31-32 (see pp. 5-9). *Manuals of Buddhism*, pp. 2-4.

the artificial man. Taking it to be a real man, they are frightened and run away.

It is clear that the deer are deceived in their perception of the form in the middle of the field. Another illustration would be a man who cannot distinguish east and west, even though he can see the sun rise and set. He will wander around and be lost. Once an error has been made, it will establish itself very firmly and it will be very difficult to remove it. There are many things within ourselves which we are continuously perceiving incorrectly. We think we see permanence and a soul, whereas there is only impermanence and lack of soul. We are like the deer who see the straw man and take him to be a real man. This illustrates the erroneous observation through perception.

Erroneous Observation through Thought. Now let us look at the simile of the erroneous observation through thought. There is an art of illusion called magic, through which lumps of earth are shown to a crowd, and everyone who sees the lumps takes them to be lumps of gold and silver. For a time, the illusion fools men's eyesight. So their beliefs, observations, or ideas are false. In the same way, our thoughts and ideas are in the habit of wrongly taking false things to be true. And thus we delude ourselves. For instance, at night we often are deceived into thinking we see a man when it's actually a stump of a tree that we are looking at.

In this world, all our mistaken ideas about what comes into the field of observation are due to the action of distorted thought. Erroneous observation through thought is deeper and more difficult to understand than that of perception since it deludes us by making false things seem true. But the erroneous observation of thought isn't as deeply rooted as dis-

torted perception, so it can be easily removed by investigation or by searching into the causes and conditions of things. This is the illustration for the erroneous observation through thought.

Erroneous Observation through Views. The simile of the man who has lost his way illustrates erroneous observation through views, which is deeper and more firmly established than the erroneous observation through thought. There was a large forest haunted by evil spirits; demons who lived there built towns and villages. A man who wasn't acquainted with the roads through the forest came along. The demons had created their towns as splendidly as those of celestial beings and assumed the forms of deities. They made the roads as pleasant and delightful as those of the deities. When the man saw them, he thought they would lead to delightful villages and turned aside from the right road. He went astray, arrived in the demon's village and suffered accordingly.

In this illustration, the large forest stands for the three worlds: (1) the world of sensual desires (*kāma-loka*), (2) the world of fine-material existence (*rūpa-loka*), and (3) the world of immaterial existence (*arūpa-loka*). The man represents those who live in these worlds. The right road is Right Views. The misleading road is Wrong Views. Right Views are of two sorts: those that pertain to the world and those pertaining to Awakening. Right Views of the world can be summed up by this statement: "All beings are the owners of their deeds. Every deed, whether wholesome or unwholesome, committed by oneself is one's own property. Deeds follow one throughout the whole of one's life." Right View pertaining to Awak-

ening means the knowledge of the Doctrine of Dependent Origination, knowledge of the aggregates, the sense bases, and lack of self.

The Right View of the world is the right road to continued existence. The worlds of fortunate beings (humans, Devas, Brahmās) are like the towns of good people, where the man wanted to go. Wrong views that deny moral and immoral deeds and their results are like the wrong, misleading roads. They lead to the unfortunate worlds, which are the abodes of the tortured—animals, ghosts (*petas*), demons (*asuras*), and beings in the hells. These are like the towns of the demons in the forest. The Right View pertaining to Awakening is like the right road that leads out of the rounds of existence. Nibbāna is like the town of good people.

The views “my body” and “my soul” are also like the wrong and misleading roads. Even with the planes of existence of fortunate beings like humans, Devas, and Brahmās, the world is like the town of the demons because of the ceaseless renewing of existence.

How are we to uproot these erroneous ways of observing and see clearly? Only through insight, Vipassanā, can we escape the road of the demons. And for insight, we must continue to maintain our morality in order to have the necessary concentration.

The Three Types of Erroneous Thought

Now let us look at the three types of erroneous thought (*maññanā*). In terms of modern psychology, we would call these cognitive distortions. *Maññanā* means fantasy, high esteem for one’s ego, strong imagination, or pretending to

oneself that one is what one is not. Erroneous observation arises because of ignorance, and erroneous thought arises because of hallucination.

There are three sorts of erroneous thought: (1) erroneous thought caused by craving (*taṇhā-maññanā*), (2) erroneous thought caused by conceit (*māna-maññanā*), and (3) erroneous thought caused by wrong beliefs (*diṭṭhi-maññanā*).

The first kind, erroneous thought caused by craving, means the mistaken idea that “This is mine. I own this.” It is clinging to what in reality isn’t mine, doesn’t belong to me. According to ultimate truth there is no “I.” If there is no “I” there can be no “This is mine. I own this.” Both personal and impersonal objects outside ourselves are strongly imagined to be ours or not ours. We think, “This is mine; that isn’t mine.” Personal objects refer to one’s body. Impersonal or external objects mean one’s relations—such as father, mother, etc., and one’s possessions.

The second kind of erroneous thought is caused by conceit. This means imagining that personal attributes such as eyes, ears, hands, legs, moral virtue, intuition, knowledge, possessing powers, and so forth, are “I,” that they are included in “I am.” Or, it means the belief that there is an “I” reinforced by impersonal objects such as family, relations, surroundings, dwellings, possessions, and so on.

Finally, erroneous thought caused by wrong views is the wrong view towards the personal attributes, thinking, “This is my body, my essence, my soul. This is the essence of my being.” This can be explained through the simile of the pot. There can be a pot made from clay or iron, and consequently there is the expression “earthenware pot” or “iron pot.” Clay

or iron when properly shaped will be called a pot. In reality the pot has no permanent existence. “Pot” is simply a name for a temporary shape.

Similarly, the primary elements, such as the earth element (that is to say, the element of extension), the water element (the element of cohesion), etc.—these primary elements come together temporarily to form a living being and are taken to be the essence of that being. We have the impression that the element of extension is the living being, the “I.”

Another name for these three kinds of erroneous thought is the Three Holds (*gaha*), indicating their power to hold tightly and firmly. We are caught in their grasp, as it were. They will cause erroneous and unwholesome actions to multiply. At first they will grow slowly and gradually. But as they multiply continuously, they go beyond all limits. They won’t decrease if allowed to go on growing. So, they are also called the Three Multipliers (*papañcas*).

The Two Dogmatic Beliefs

Now let us examine the two kinds of dogmatic beliefs (*abhinivesas*). By dogmatic belief we mean a strong belief, fixed as firmly in the mind as door posts, stone pillars, or a big monument—so immovable that determined effort will not displace them.

They are: (1) dogmatic belief induced by craving (*taṇhābhinivesa*) and (2) dogmatic belief induced by wrong views or beliefs (*diṭṭhābhinivesa*). Dogmatic belief that comes from craving leads to the mistaken belief throughout the long succession of lives that each body, head, hands, etc., is ours. We are attached to the physical body.

Dogmatic belief that comes from wrong view refers to the firm and unshakeable belief in the existence of the soul or self in a person or creature. It means the belief that there is an unchanging superior thing that governs the body. These dogmatic beliefs are also called the two great supports for craving and wrong view (*taṇhā-nissaya, diṭṭhi-nissaya*). They take their support in the five aggregates and in mental-physical phenomena (*nāma-rūpa*).

The Two Stages

Next, let us look at the two stages of being (*bhūmis*): (1) the stage of the ordinary being and (2) the stage of the noble being (*ariya-bhūmi*). In terms of the ultimate truth, the stage of the ordinary being is a hallucination, a wrong view. All creatures of the ordinary worldly kind have their support in wrong view (*diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*), thinking, “There is in me, or in my body, something that is permanent, pleasurable, and substantial.” Ordinary beings have their support in the fantasy of wrong view, the grasp of wrong view, the multiplier of wrong view. Therefore, they cannot be released from the status of ordinary existence as long as they continue to use wrong view as their support.

At the stage of noble existence, all hallucination is eradicated. There is, in the ultimate sense, Right View, Right Understanding. One knows, “There is in me and in my body nothing that is permanent, pleasurable, and substantial.” As an Ariya lives with Right View as his main footing, Right View can be called the stage of the Ariya.

If a person who has been an ordinary being during countless existences in the rounds of existence of no known begin-

ning eradicates the hallucination of error and attains Right View, he becomes a Noble One, an Ariya, at that very moment. Even if in the stages of Awakening lower than Arahatship there can remain some hallucinations of the mind and perception, those who have reached those levels won't do the sort of unwholesome deeds that will cause them to come back in the lower worlds of misfortune. The weighty perceptual distortion is eradicated. The two remaining erroneous ways of observing would merely enable them to enjoy such worldly pleasures as they have lawfully earned.

The Two Destinations

Then we come to the two destinations (*gatis*). *Gati* means “going,” that is, going from life to life, through rebirth. It is the future destination of beings. There is (1) the destination of ordinary beings (*puthujjana-gati*) and (2) the destination of noble beings (*ariya-gati*). The first sort of destination is dispersive (*vinipātana*) because one is liable to be reborn in any of the thirty-one planes of existence, depending on one's past *kamma*. Just as one cannot tell where a fruit falling from a tree will come to rest, so also, it's impossible to predict where one will take rebirth if one is an ordinary being. Everything that is born must die. So the two great evils of death and dispersion are inseparably linked to every ordinary being.

“Dispersal after death” is worse than death itself, because the four realms of misery are wide open to the ordinary man when he dies. No matter where he is, there is no intervening period of time between the two existences. In the wink of an eye, he may be reborn as an animal, as a wretched ghost (*peta*), or as an earth spirit such as the enemies of Sakka, the

king of the Devas. The same thing can happen if one is in the higher planes of sensual pleasures. But from the Brahmā planes of fine-material and immaterial existence, there isn't a direct fall into the four realms of misery. First, one will become a human being or a Deva. But from those existences, the lower realms are open to him.

Why do people fear death? It is because of this dispersal after death. If one could be reborn where one wished, there would be no fear of death.

We find two similes in the Pāli texts that help us understand the deeper significance of the dispersion of existence. They are the simile of the dust on the fingernail¹ and the simile of the blind turtle.²

One day, the Buddha put some dust on the tip of his fingernail and asked the bhikkhus, "If these few grains of dust on my fingernail were compared in quantity with all the dust in the universe, which would be greater?" The bhikkhus replied, of course, that the dust throughout the universe was much greater.

"Similarly," the Buddha told them, "those who are reborn in the realms of men and Devas after they die are very few, like the grains of dust on my fingernail. Those who are reborn in the four realms of misery are exceedingly many, like the dust in all the universe. Whether they die as men or Devas, or die in one of the lower realms, it's the same."

¹*The Kindred Sayings*, II 175f.

²*The Kindred Sayings*, V 384f. (cf. *The Middle Length Sayings*, III 214f.).

If we think only of the number and variety of creatures living in the oceans of the world, we'll get some impression of how great the evil of dispersion is.

On another occasion the Buddha told the bhikkhus, "Imagine a blind turtle living in the ocean. He dives down in the water and swims constantly in any direction. There's also the yoke of a wagon floating in the ocean on the surface of the water, carried along in all directions by the tide, the current, and the wind. Imagine that the turtle keeps swimming and the yoke keeps floating for an incalculable length of time. It may happen that eventually the turtle and the yoke arrive at precisely the same place at the same time so that the blind turtle puts his head up through the yoke. Is it possible?" The bhikkhus replied that in ordinary terms it was not, but if it were possible for the turtle to live long enough and the yoke could last without rotting or breaking up, then a world cycle, which lasts such a long time, might be long enough for such a thing to happen.

"Such an occurrence should not be considered difficult," the Buddha continued, "for it's a hundred times harder, a thousand times more difficult for a man to be reborn as a man if ever he is reborn in the four lower realms. Only those who perform good deeds and abstain from doing unwholesome deeds can attain existence as men or Devas. Beings in the four worlds of misery cannot discern what is virtuous and what is vicious, what is good and what is bad, what is moral and what is immoral, what is meritorious and what is demeritorious. They live lives of constant immorality and demerit, tormenting one another with all their power. Creatures in the hells and ghost world in particular live very miserable lives due to the

punishments and torments which they experience with sorrow, pain, and distress.”

The creatures described in this discourse as living in the lower worlds are far from human existence because they always look down and never look up. By looking down, I mean that their ignorance becomes stronger and stronger as they go from one existence to another. Just as the water of a river flows down to the plains, so too, they tend towards lower existences.

Now, after this rather depressing picture, let us give some balance by talking about the Destination of the Noble Ones (*ariya-gati*). They are delivered from the dispersion of existence after death. There is the possibility to be reborn in the higher planes and to choose one’s destiny. It is like a bird who flies in the air and alights wherever it pleases. Men, Devas, and Brahmās who have attained Ariya status can go to even better planes of existence. Should they die unexpectedly, without aiming at any particular plane, they are sure to be reborn in a higher plane and are free from rebirth in the four realms of misery. If they are reborn as humans they are never born poor, nor are they fools or heretics. And the same is true for Noble Devas and Brahmās. They are entirely free from the destiny of ordinary beings.

So this explanation should not depress us, thinking of all the bad things that could happen to us. Rather, we should be inspired to work for that state that will assure us of happy lives and eventually the end of all rebirth.

DAY SEVEN: EVENING DISCOURSE

The Radiance of Meditation

<i>Divā tapati ādicco,</i>	<i>rattim ābhāti candimā,</i>
<i>Sannaddho khattiyo tapati,</i>	<i>jhāyī tapati brāhmaṇo,</i>
<i>Atha sabbam ahorattim</i>	<i>Buddho tapati tejasā.</i>

The sun shines during the day. The moon is radiant at night. The warrior shines in his armour. The Brahman [fully Awakened] shines as he meditates. But the Buddha shines both day and night.

Dhammapada v. 387

This verse was pronounced by the Buddha when he was residing in the monastery given by Mother Visākhā. It was spoken to Elder Ānanda in confirmation of what the Elder had seen.¹ On a special festival day, King Pasenadi of Kosala went to the monastery, dressed in all his armour and bearing garlands and perfumes. At that moment, Elder Kāḷudāyī was sitting in the outer circle of the Order of Bhikkhus, having entered a deep meditation state. His body was pleasing to look at, for it was of a golden hue. Just at that moment, the moon rose and the sun set. Elder Ānanda looked at the radiance of the sun as it set and of the moon as it rose. Then he looked at the radiance of the king's body and the radiance of the meditating Elder and at the radiance of the Buddha. The Teacher far outshone the radiance of all the others.

¹*Buddhist Legends*, III 278f.

Venerable Ānanda paid respects to the Buddha and said, “Venerable sir, as I gazed at the radiance of all these bodies today, the radiance of your body alone satisfied me. For your body far outshone the radiance of all these others.” And the Buddha said, “Ānanda, the sun shines during the day, the moon at night, and the king when he wears his armour. The Arahāt shines when he has left human associations behind and is absorbed in meditation, but the Buddhas shine both by day and by night. They shine with a fivefold brightness.” And he uttered the verse with which we started.

The inference here is that a meditator can also shine while he is meditating. Even Arahats only shine when they are meditating. The Buddha alone shines all day and all night. Such is the power of your meditation.

The Story of the Herdsman Nanda¹

*Diso disaṃ yaṃ taṃ kayirā, verī vā pana verinaṃ
Micchāpaṇihitaṃ cittaṃ pāpiyo naṃ tato kare.*

Whatever an enemy could do to his enemy, or even a
hostile [person] to [another] hostile [person]—a
wrongly-directed mind would do worse to one.

Dhammapada v. 42

This verse was spoken by the Buddha when he explained to the bhikkhus about the death of Nanda. Nanda looked after the herds of the lay disciple Anāthapiṇḍika. Nanda invited the Buddha to come to his house, but the Buddha knew that he was not ready and waited for his wisdom to mature. Finally, when he knew Nanda would benefit, he went to him and

¹*Buddhist Legends*, II 22f. and *Dhammapada Commentary*, I 140f.

established him in the first stage of Awakening. Nanda followed the Buddha when he left, and after a while the Buddha took leave of him. On his way home, Nanda was shot and killed by a hunter's arrow.

The bhikkhus who were with the Buddha said to him, "Lord, if you hadn't come, he wouldn't have been killed." But the Teacher said, "Bhikkhus, whether I came or not, there was no escape for him from death in whichever of the four directions and the four corners he might have gone." Nanda's death, of course, was the result of some bad deed done in a past life. It is the wrongly-directed mind, mentioned in the verse, that is responsible for the wrong deed which results in great harm.

The mind can be directed towards ten kinds of evil which include breaking the precepts and the three unwholesome roots. The three unwholesome roots are greed, hate, and delusion—here, in the sense of wrong beliefs. The precepts that the wrongly-directed mind tends towards breaking are killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slandering, harsh speech, and vain talk. As you can see, it's possible to subdivide the precept concerning speech, as there is more to wrong speech than telling lies.

Right Understanding¹

During the first few days, when we were practising Ānāpāna, we looked at the six parts of the Noble Eightfold Path that apply to Ānāpāna. Now that we are fully on the path with Vipassanā, we can give a detailed look at the last two

¹*The Manuals of Buddhism*, pp. 221-236.

steps: Right Understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and Right Contemplation (*sammā-saṅkappa*). I will base the discussion on *The Manual of Constituents of the Noble Path* by Venerable Ledi Sayadaw, who was the teacher of Sayagyi U Ba Khin's teacher.

Right Understanding or Right View can be divided into three aspects: (1) Understanding correctly that only two things can follow living beings from one existence to the next—wholesome acts and unwholesome acts (*kammassakata sammā-diṭṭhi*); (2) understanding rightly the ten kinds of subjects concerning the rounds of existence, the results of intentional actions, and liberation; and (3) there is right understanding of the Four Noble Truths.

There exists in the world property such as houses, cars, gold, and silver. Such things belong to us in our present existence. When we die, that property cannot accompany us. Possessions of this sort are like borrowed property. Only mental, verbal, and physical volitional actions accompany us in this as well as in future lives. Volitional actions aren't liable to destruction by fire, water, rulers, thieves, or enemies.

All living beings perform the three kinds of volitional actions—physical, verbal, or mental—at all times when they're awake. All their work is done thanks to these actions. When they're asleep these actions are inert. When they die, the actions cease to function as far as that body is concerned. The three kinds of volitional actions are either good or bad, and they can give results either in this life or in a future life.

We gave the ten kinds of immoral conduct with the second Dhammapada verse we quoted. We must avoid wrong actions in gaining a livelihood, in acquiring material goods, and in

seeking knowledge. This will make for good volitional actions (*kamma*) that have to be performed in this existence. But we must do more than be free of wrong conduct if we aim at future existences and if we wish to be born in a good abode. We must also do good actions such as generosity and observing the eight precepts on special days. We must practise meditation and pay respects to the Triple Gem: the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha.

If we indulge in the ten kinds of wrong actions (breaking the precepts with insistence on the various kinds of wrong speech), if we act out of covetousness, ill will, or wrong views, then those intentional deeds will lead us to the lower planes in future existences.

We should observe for ourselves how mental, verbal, and physical volitional actions are being performed everywhere—on land, in the water, and in the sky—by all kinds of living creatures. Having seen this with our own eyes, we can understand also that these beings have been acting in the same way in their past existences for endless world cycles. And they will go on acting this way in the future. And there are infinite universes in all four directions with creatures on land, in the water, and in the sky, performing these three types of volitional acts. Then we will understand that good results come from wholesome actions and that the various kinds of misery and suffering come from unwholesome actions. You may own nothing—not even a single coin—and yet you can be happy if you possess mental volitional action in the form of knowledge and wisdom.

Those who wish to acquire worldly gains, such as wealth, governmental standing, and honour in this life, can achieve

their wish if they exert themselves and acquire education and knowledge. These things don't come by simply wishing for them or praying for them. If that were possible, no one would have to learn the arts and sciences or have to farm and so on. And just as what one gains in this world comes through one's own efforts, so too, someone who performs the good deeds we have enumerated will be born in a wealthy family or in a Deva world in a future life. Therefore, the Buddha said that our volitional actions are our property (*sabbe sattā kamma-ssaka*). The *kamma* we make, that is, our volitional acts, can be compared to seeds. A plant in the past has produced a seed. The seed has potential in it, potential energy that will cause the seed to develop into a plant like the one it came from if the right conditions prevail. And *that* plant will produce new seeds. Just as the seed will resemble the plant it comes from, wholesome deeds will lead to life as a human or Deva. Unwholesome deeds will lead to a life in a demon world, as a wandering ghost, an animal, or a life in one of the hells.

A plant is a physical phenomenon only. There's no volitional consciousness in a plant. But sentient beings are made up of both physical and mental phenomena. The mental factor is the most important. One mental factor can produce only one new rebirth consciousness. Therefore, although a being has many wholesome and unwholesome volitional acts in a given existence, only *one* will produce a rebirth consciousness and determine that life. A being isn't created by some higher being. Such a belief is wrong view. Right view is the realization that beings such as men, animals, and so on, come into new existences because of the seeds of past *kamma* performed in previous world cycles.

An inheritance of material goods can only be called our property for the duration of one lifetime. But mental, verbal, and physical *kamma* will follow us through all our lives. That is our true inheritance. Wholesome *kamma* such as feeding dogs, pigs, birds, and fowl can result in a hundred happy existences. Feeding virtuous bhikkhus can give rise to countless happy existences as a man or a Deva. Giving alms that are worth only twenty-five pence can yield beneficial results worth more than a thousand pounds in future existences. But if a person kills an animal such as a fish, fowl, or a pig, he may be killed in more than a thousand future existences.

If we plant a tiny apple seed, it can give a big tree that will bear innumerable apples. Similarly, a seed of wholesome *kamma* such as alms giving, morality, or meditation can yield more than a hundred thousand good results in future existences. The effects of one's *kamma* always accompany one in many existences, yielding good or bad results at the opportune moments. This is why the Buddha said that our volitional actions are our inherited property (*sabbe sattā kamma-dāyada*).

There are several causes for the growth of a plant: the seed, the earth, and water. The seed is the primary cause. The soil and water are secondary causes. For a human being, past wholesome actions are the primary cause. Parents are the secondary cause. This is why the Buddha said our wholesome and unwholesome actions are the origin of our wanderings in many lives (*sabbe sattā kamma-yoni*).

We have parents, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, relatives and friends, teachers whom we love and rely on—but only for a short period, only until we die. Our

kamma, on the other hand, will be a constant companion. Only our wholesome volitional actions can give us happiness and prosperity in future existences. This is why the Buddha said that only volitional actions are the true friends and relatives that accompany beings throughout all their lives (*sabbe sattā kamma-bandhu*).

Wholesome *kamma* is our protection in our present lives against danger, and we must rely on it in order to avoid suffering in future existences. It will be our refuge in every existence, as the law governing *kamma* operates in this universe as well as in the other innumerable universes, whether we encounter the period during which a Buddha's Teachings can be encountered (*Buddha-sāsana*) or not. That's why the Buddha mentions *kamma* alone and not the Triple Gem in saying, "Only volitional actions are the true refuge of beings, wherever they may wander in many lives." (*Sabbe sattā kamma-ppaṭisaraṇa*.)

"Refuge" means reliance upon or taking shelter for protection against troubles and dangers. It doesn't only mean paying respects. The Pāḷi word *saraṇa*, usually translated "refuge," means "that which can save, give support or protection." And in our daily lives, we rely on material things as a protection. For example, food and drink are the support for long life; medicine and proper diet are relied on to effect a cure; governments protect us against robbers and criminals; a building protects us from the rain and cold; the earth is a support, as well as water, fire, and air.

At the present time, with the Teachings of the Buddha still alive, there are three more refuges: the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha. The four refuges can be compared to the four kinds

of refuge for a sick man. He can rely on a doctor, good medicine, nurses, and on following their advice. The Buddha resembles the doctor who is expert in curing diseases. The Teaching, the Dhamma, is like the medicine. The Order or Saṅgha is like the nurse. And the wholesome mental, verbal, and physical *kamma* of our past and present lives is like the sensible action of the patient who follows directions.

This is Right Understanding from the point of view of understanding correctly that only wholesome and unwholesome acts can follow living beings from one existence to another.

There are ten kinds of understanding with regard to the rounds of existence, the results of intentional actions, and liberation from suffering (*dasa vattuka-sammā-diṭṭhi*). First, there's right understanding that generosity, if performed with benevolence in one existence, will yield beneficial results in subsequent existences (*atthi dinnam*). Secondly, there's right understanding that liberality, if done on a large scale with faith in and respect for the virtuous qualities of the recipients, yields beneficial results in future existences (*atthi yiṭṭham*). Then thirdly, there's right understanding that gifts, even on a small scale, if made with good will, will yield beneficial results in future existences (*atthi hutam*). Fourthly, there's right understanding that cruel deeds done to beings in one existence will yield bad results in subsequent existences, and that refraining from such evil acts yields beneficial results (*atthi sukata dukkaṭānaṃ kammānaṃ phalaṃ vipāko*).

You will note in passing that great emphasis is laid on the fact that most results aren't in the same existence but rather in future lives. If the reverse were true, it would be obvious to

everyone that the rewards and sufferings that result from wholesome and unwholesome deeds were inevitable.

The fifth and sixth points are right understanding that good and evil deeds done to one's mother and to one's father yield good and evil results respectively in subsequent existences. We can see that our duty to our parents is so important it's singled out and given in two separate points (*atthi mātā, atthi pitā*).

The seventh point is the right understanding that there really exist beings of apparitional rebirth who are invisible to the human eye. Beings of apparitional rebirth are those that don't take conception in the womb of a mother. Due to the force of their previous *kamma*, they are born complete with limbs and organs of the body which won't develop further but remain as they are. Beings of apparitional rebirth exist in all other planes except the animal plane. There are eight hells as well as ghosts (*petas*), demons (*asuras*), earth deities or Devas, ogres, Nāgas, and Garulas. Above the human plane there are Devas of the six heavenly worlds, and the Brahmās of the twenty Brahmā planes, which consist of three planes for the first *jhāna*, three for the second *jhāna*, three for the third *jhāna*, and seven for the fourth *jhāna*. Above those, there are four immaterial planes (*arūpa*). In the lower three of the twenty Brahmā planes, there is a Brahmā of great power who is regarded by some mistaken persons as God.

The sun, moon, stars, and constellations in the sky are the heavenly mansions of Devas. By seeing those heavenly abodes, one can visualize the existence of higher planes of the Devas, Sakkas, and Brahmās.

Even when men are close to those beings, men are unable to see them with their human eyes (*atthi sattā opapātika*). It is only when they make their forms visible that men can see them.

The eighth and ninth points are right understanding that this world is the human world (*atthi ayaṃ loko*) and that the other worlds consist of the four lower worlds, the Deva planes, and Brahmā planes (*atthi paro loko*), and that there are an infinite number of universes in all directions.

Finally, we come to the tenth point, which is right understanding that there really exist, in this human world, persons like the Omniscient Buddha, bhikkhus, and Brahmans (in the sense used by the Buddha of “a righteous man”) who practise the true Dhamma and possess tranquillity of mind, and who, having seen and realized this very world and other worlds through their own insight, impart their knowledge to others (*atthi loke samaṇa-brāhmaṇā samaggaṭā sammāpaṭipannā ye imaṃ ca lokam paraṃ ca lokam sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedenti*).

Right Understanding of the four Noble Truths is the penetrative insight into the truth of suffering, the truth of the origin of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering, and the truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering. These we have already dealt with in previous talks.

Right Contemplation

The last step in the Eightfold Noble Path is Right Contemplation or Right Thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*). We can divide this into three parts: (1) Right Thought that is free from greed and sensuous desire, aiming at an escape from the round of

rebirths (*nekkhama saṅkappa*); (2) Right Thought for the Welfare of all living beings (*abyāpāda saṅkappa*); and (3) Right Thought for the non-injury of all living beings (*avihiṃsa saṅkappa*). So this includes renouncing stimulating sensuous desires and developing loving kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity.

Dependent Origination

Now let us look at how cause and effect work in conjunction with our volitional acts. This doctrine, known as Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), is one of the basic teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda, “Deep indeed is dependent origination, Ānanda, and it appears deep. It is through not understanding, through not penetrating this doctrine, that these beings have become entangled like a matted ball of thread, become like muñja grass and rushes, unable to pass beyond the woeful states of existence, the cycles of rebirth (*samsāra*).”¹

This is the doctrine that was referred to by Venerable Assaji when Upatissa, who was later known as Sāriputta, asked him to explain the doctrine of his teacher. As we have seen, two lines mentioning this doctrine were sufficient for Ven. Sāriputta to reach the first fruition stage of Awakening:

*Ye dhammā hetuppabhāvā tesam hetum Tathāgato āha,
Tesam ca yo nirodho evaṃ vādī Mahāsamano.*

¹*Dialogues of the Buddha*, II 50.

The Perfect One has explained the cause of all phenomena, and that which is their cessation—such is the doctrine of the Great Recluse.

The Book of the Discipline, IV 54

This doctrine isn't something invented by the Buddha, or a cleverly worked out philosophical system open to modification and amendment. It isn't the invention of some divine being. Dependent Origination is the ultimate reality of all phenomena—the arising of conditioned states and the cessation of conditioned states. This goes on whether there is a Buddha or not.

*Imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti, imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjati,
imasmim̐ asati idaṃ no hoti, imassa nirodhā idaṃ
nirujjhati.*

When *this* is, *that* comes to be.

With the arising of *this*, *that* arises.

When *this* is not, *that* does not come to be.

With the cessation of *this*, *that* ceases.¹

This ultimate truth of Dependent Origination was discovered by the Buddha through his Awakening. After he was Awakened, he sat by the foot of the Bodhi tree at Gaya, experiencing the supreme bliss of emancipation.² When the seven days were over, he emerged from his concentrated meditation, and during the first watch of the night, he thought over the

¹This statement occurs in several discourses; for example: *Middle Length Sayings*, II 32, III 107; *Kindred Sayings*, II 23, 66, etc.

²*Verses of Uplift*, pp. 1-3.

arising aspect of Dependent Origination (*anuloma*): “When *this* exists, *that* comes to be. With the arising of *this*, *that* arises.”

In the middle watch, he thought over Dependent Origination from the point of view of cessation (*paṭiloma*): “When *this* doesn’t exist, *that* doesn’t come to be. With the cessation of *this*, *that* ceases.” And in the last watch of the night, the Buddha reflected on Dependent Origination both arising and ceasing: “This is the arising of suffering, the origin of suffering. This is the end of suffering.”

Here are the eleven steps of Dependent Origination:

Dependent on ignorance, volitional formations arise.

Dependent on volitional formations, consciousness arises.

Dependent on consciousness, the mind-body phenomenon arises.

Dependent on the mind-body phenomenon, the six bases for the senses arise.

Dependent on the six bases for the senses, contact arises.

Dependent on contact, sensations arise.

Dependent on sensations, craving arises.

Dependent on craving, clinging arises.

Dependent on clinging, conditioned existence arises.¹

¹According to the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, *bhava* as the result of clinging means *upapatti-bhava* (existence through the rebirth process). See Ven. Nārada’s translation, *A Manual of Abhidhamma*, pp. 358, 364 (revised translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, pp. 298, 301). This includes existence in the eleven realms of sense desire (*kāma-bhava*), existence in the sixteen fine-material realms (*rūpa-bhava*), and existence in the four non-material realms (*arūpa-bhava*). See *Ten Suttas from Dīgha Nikāya*, p. 161, note 1.

Dependent on moral and immoral actions in the present existence,¹ the process of rebirth arises.

Dependent on the process of rebirth, aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair arise.

Thus does the whole mass of suffering arise.

Dependent Origination from the point of view of cessation involves the same eleven steps. When any one of the steps ceases, then the next step ceases as well:

Through the entire cessation of ignorance, volitional formations cease.

Through the cessation of volitional formations, consciousness ceases. ...

and so on to the cessation of the whole mass of suffering.

Now the first step, ignorance (*avijjā*), isn't to be understood as a first beginning. It's impossible to conceive of a first beginning. The origin of suffering can only be known as an on-going process which we can understand through observing it as it works. No one, not even a Buddha, can trace this process back to a first beginning.

Let's look at the various steps in a little more detail. In past lives we have done good and bad volitional acts with mind, word, and deed because we were ignorant of the true reality of conditioned states. So our ignorance (*avijjā*) led us to set loose

¹According to the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, *bhava* as the condition for rebirth means *kamma-bhava* (the existence of [volitional] actions)—volitional actions done in the present leading to future rebirth and the mental phenomena associated with such actions. See the references in the preceding footnote.

these mental forces (*saṅkhāra*) that have led to our present existence.

In our present lives, because of our past deeds, we have consciousness, a life continuum (*viññāṇa*) that is continually supporting this mind-body phenomenon (*nāma-rūpa*) that we call “I, mine.” This mind-body phenomenon has six senses (*saḷāyatana*)—sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and thinking and imagining. They make it possible for there to be contact with the objects that stimulate those senses (*phassa*). This contact will give rise to sensations, feelings (*vedana*). We will react to these sensations, which we find to be either pleasant or unpleasant or neutral, and thus craving (*taṇhā*) will arise. We crave to prolong the agreeable sensations. We crave to get rid of the disagreeable sensations. So this craving will lead to attachment, clinging (*upādāna*). Our clinging will result in conditioned existence (*bhava*), and during our new existence we will commit innumerable volitional acts that will be either good or bad. In this way we will go to a new birth (*jāti*) that will only bring once more old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair (*jarā-maraṇaṃ sokapari-deva-dukkha-domanassupāyāsa*).

This is the vicious circle of cause and effect. And we are responsible for the whole process. It is our desire and clinging that leads us to do good and bad actions that will bind us to this whole process of suffering.

But it can all be stopped. If any one link in this chain is broken, the whole process will stop. And we are working here in order to be able to do just that. There’s one link in the chain that’s particularly appropriate for laymen to work on—the link

between sensations and the craving that arises because of the reaction to the sensations.

As we sit here with our eyes closed, watching our sensations, the whole process is happening an innumerable number of times each second. Each sensation is the result of some volitional act done through ignorance in the past. If we can become engrossed in the knowing of *anicca*—the change taking place in a sensation—we will be developing automatically that balanced attitude, that equanimity, which will enable us one day to cut through the link to the next step. We will be working towards cutting off the craving that we normally allow to arise. We won't be able to break the link until we're able to attain liberation, and this takes much preparation.

Much more could be said about Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), but I think this much will help you appreciate the importance of your meditation and why you are working the way you are. If you can know sensations as they are, *anicca*, changing, you will understand the truth of the origin of suffering; you will lose your craving for sensations and discover the truth of the cessation of suffering. Ignorance will go and this entire process of Dependent Origination will end.

After reflecting on Dependent Origination in rising order (*anuloma*), this verse occurred to the Buddha:¹

¹The next three stanzas are from *The Book of the Discipline*, IV 2f., and *Verses of Uplift*, pp. 2f. (more recent translation by Peter Masefield: *The Udāna*, pp. 1–3).

When things are fully manifest to the ardent, meditating Brahman, his doubts all vanish, for he knows that each thing has to have its cause.

After reflecting on Dependent Origination in the order of cessation (*paṭiloma*), this verse occurred to the Buddha:

When things are fully manifest to the ardent, meditating Brahman, his doubts all end, for he perceives how the conditions come to an end.

After reflecting on Dependent Origination in both rising order and in the order of cessation, this verse occurred to the Buddha:

When things are fully manifest to the ardent, meditating Brahman, there, like the sun that lights the sky, he stands, repelling the soldiers of Māra.

And the first words spoken aloud by the Buddha after attaining full Awakening were these:

I have run through countless births in journeying on, seeking, but not finding, the builder of the house.

Being born again and again is suffering.

You are seen, housebuilder. You will not build a house again.

All your rafters are broken. Your ridge-pole is torn asunder.

The mind has arrived at the extinction of conditioned phenomena. The complete destruction of cravings has been experienced.

Dhammapada vv. 153-154

DAY EIGHT: MORNING DISCOURSE

Being One's Own Refuge

Attā hi attano nātho ko hi nātho paro siyā?
Attanā hi sudantena nāthaṃ labhati dullabhaṃ.

Self is the refuge of self, for how can one man be
another man's refuge?

Through being well controlled oneself, one becomes a
refuge for oneself; and this refuge is difficult to
obtain.

Dhammapada v. 160

The word in this Dhammapada verse that we translate as “refuge” is *nātha*, which can also mean protector, saviour, lord, or master. There are ten actions that enable a man to become his own refuge: moral actions; learning the Teachings; being a virtuous companion to others; being humble and patient; cheerfully performing one's day-to-day duties; delighting in the Dhamma; being satisfied with the four necessities of clothing, food, bedding, and medicine; putting forth energy in right effort; being thoughtful and circumspect—or, in terms of meditation, Right Concentration—and finally; attaining wisdom in its highest sense—Insight-knowledge, which gives liberation.

The Story of Kumāra-Kassapa and His Mother¹

This verse was given in reference to the mother of Kumāra-Kassapa. Decline and fall are inevitable for all things; even the Buddha's Dispensation (*Buddha-sāsana*) isn't an exception. We have already given the stories of some of the group of seven bhikkhus who climbed to the top of a high rock during the period when the dispensation of the Buddha Kassapa had begun to decline. Two of them attained their goal, but the other five had to wait until they met the Buddha Gotama. Dabba-Mallaputta was one of the eighty leading disciples among the bhikkhus and was foremost in preparing seats. The ascetic Bāhiya Dārucīriya became an Arahāt in the least time. He grasped the Dhamma through a single phrase. Sabhiya was a skilful debater. Pukkusāti was a brahman who reached the first fruition stage through a sermon preached by the Buddha. The bhikkhu whose story we will give here was Kumāra-Kassapa, who was foremost for the brilliant imagery in his discourses.

Kumāra-Kassapa's mother was the daughter of a treasurer in the city of Rājagaha. She had begged her parents to let her become a bhikkhunī, but they refused. They married her to a suitable husband when she was of age, but she managed to persuade him to allow her to become a bhikkhunī. She didn't realize when she ordained that she was pregnant.

She ordained in the group of bhikkhunīs that belonged to the faction of Devadatta, who had broken ties with the Buddha. When it became obvious she was pregnant, the bhikkhunīs wondered what to do. Devadatta, who was afraid

¹*Buddhist Legends*, II 356-359.

of being criticized, told them to expel her. But she had faith in the Buddha and asked to be taken to him. The Buddha realized that she had conceived before being ordained and was therefore above reproach. But in order to dispel any doubts in others, he summoned four leading lay disciples—King Pasenadi of Kosala, Mahā-Anāthapiṇḍika, Culla-Anāthapiṇḍika, and Mother Visākhā—and gave the order to Elder Upali, who was foremost in the rules of the Order, that he should clear the young woman of the charge against her. The lay woman, Mother Visākhā, was able to determine that the bhikkhunī had conceived before joining the Order. She was able to remain a bhikkhunī, and in due course she gave birth to a boy.

One day, the king passed by the community of bhikkhunīs and heard the baby crying. He enquired about it and was told that a bhikkhunī had had a boy. He adopted the boy and named him Kumāra-Kassapa. Later, a day came when Kumāra-Kassapa's playmates made fun of him because he had no mother or father. He enquired of the king what this meant. Who was his mother? The king pointed to his daughters, who had raised the boy, and said, "These are your mothers." But the boy knew that he should have only one mother. Finally, the king told him the whole story. No sooner did he learn the truth than he wished to retire from the world and become a bhikkhu.

Kumāra-Kassapa was ordained and given a meditation subject. One night, as he was meditating, a deity appeared in the grove where he was, illuminating the entire area. This was the bhikkhu he had worked alongside during the dispensation of the Buddha Kassapa, the bhikkhu who had attained the state of Anāgāmi. The deity presented Kumāra-Kassapa with

an allegory, saying that he should ask the Buddha to explain the meaning. He said that in all the various planes of existence, he could only see the Buddha, a disciple of the Buddha, or someone who had learned from them as being capable of explaining the meaning.

The Allegory of the Anthill¹

And so he gave the allegory of the anthill. There is an anthill that smokes by night and blazes up by day. A brahman says to his helper, "Bring a tool and dig up the anthill, clever man." The clever man digs. As he digs he uncovers various objects: (1) a bolt, (2) a frog, (3) a sign-post marking two directions, (4) a strainer, (5) a tortoise, (6) a butcher's knife and chopping block, (7) a piece of flesh, and finally (8) the Nāga serpent living in the anthill.

Kumāra-Kassapa went to the Buddha and asked him to explain the meaning. The anthill, the Buddha said, is a synonym for the body, which is made up of the four great elements, which originates from a mother and father, which is nourished on food, and which is constantly being rubbed away, pounded away, broken up, and scattered. Whatever one thinks about and ponders over during the night concerning the day's affairs, this is the smoking by night. Whatever affairs one sets about doing by day—whether through bodily actions, speech, or thought—after having pondered and reflected on them during the night, this is the blazing up by day.

¹*The Middle Length Sayings*, I 183-186.

The brahman is the synonym for the Buddha, the Perfected One, the Fully Self-Awakened One. He can show the way to his helper, the clever man.

The clever man is a symbol for the learner. And this term, “learner,” was used by the Buddha to refer to one who was established in the Dhamma, who had made progress, and who was on the path to final liberation.

The tool used for digging is a symbol for insight-wisdom, Vipassanā. Digging means putting forth energy, Right Concentration. The bolt is a symbol of ignorance. So one should get rid of ignorance, dig, become a learner, and use insight.

The frog is a symbol for hate or wrath and the turbulence that comes with it. The sign-post showing two directions is a symbol of being perplexed. The strainer is the symbol for the five hindrances: sense pleasures, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and sceptical doubt. The tortoise is a symbol for the five groups conducive to clinging: material shapes, sensations, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. The butcher’s knife and chopping block stand for the five types of sensual pleasures connected with the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. They are agreeable, pleasant, liked, enticing, connected with sensual pleasures, alluring. The piece of flesh stands for the passion of delight.

The clever man, guided by the Teacher, digs inside himself, making a great effort, using Right Concentration and insight-knowledge, and he gets rid of ignorance, ill will, confusion, the five hindrances, the five groups conducive to clinging, the five types of sensual pleasure, the passion of delight, and reaches his goal—symbolized in the allegory by the Nāga serpent that lives in the anthill. He reaches Nibbāna.

Kumāra-Kassapa finally reached the goal which he had been working towards for a hundred thousand world cycles. The vivid images of the allegory were in keeping with his aspiration, which was to be skilled in the use of brilliant images in giving discourses.

Now his mother went about crying for twelve years, so great was her attachment to her son. One day, after he became an Arahāt, she saw him in the street. She ran up to him, crying, “My son! My son!” She fell down at his feet and milk flowed from her breast. Kumāra-Kassapa thought to himself, “If I speak kind words to her, it will be her undoing. I must speak to her very firmly.” So he said to her, “What are you doing? Can’t you get rid of sentimental human affection?” This gave her the jolt she needed, and she thought to herself, “Because of him, I haven’t been able to restrain my tears for twelve years. But he has hardened his heart towards me. Why should I have anything more to do with him?” And through uprooting affection for her son, she was able to put forth effort and attain Arahātship.

Some time afterwards, the bhikkhus were discussing this incident. They said, “Because of Devadatta, Kumāra-Kassapa, who had made all the preparations for attaining Awakening, almost went to destruction. And the same was true for his mother. But the Teacher became their refuge. How great is the compassion of the Buddhas for the world!” The Buddha explained to the bhikkhus that this wasn’t the first time he had been a refuge to Kumāra-Kassapa and his mother. And praising her for uprooting her affection for her son and for establishing herself as a refuge for herself, he spoke the verses we began with:

Self is the refuge of self, for how can one man be
another man's refuge?

Through being well controlled oneself, one becomes a
refuge for oneself; and this refuge is difficult to
obtain.

Dhammapada v. 160

The Seven Factors of Awakening

Now let us examine the seven factors of Awakening. The Pāḷi word for "factor of Awakening" is *bojjhaṅga*. It comes from the word *bodhi*, which means awakened, being enlightened, and from the word *aṅga*, which means limb or factor. In the Pāḷi canon we find three very similar occasions on which the seven factors of Awakening are given. As we will see, the reciting of these factors was used as a protection (*paritta*) against pain, sickness, disease, and adversity, and they continue to be used in that way in Buddhist countries today.

On three different occasions Mahā-Kassapa, Mahā-Moggallāna, and the Buddha himself were seriously ill. By hearing the factors of Awakening recited, each of them recovered from his affliction and illness.¹

Here is the example of Mahā-Kassapa. At a time when the Buddha was living at Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the feeding ground of squirrels, Mahā-Kassapa was living in Pipphali Cave, afflicted with disease, sick, stricken, and seriously ill. The Lord visited him, took the seat that was prepared for him, and spoke to Mahā-Kassapa.

¹*The Kindred Sayings*, V 66-68.

“Well, Kassapa, how is it with you? Are you bearing up, are you enduring? Do your pains lessen or increase? Are there signs of your pains lessening and not increasing?”

Mahā-Kassapa answered, “No, Lord, I’m not bearing up. I’m not enduring. The pain is very great. There is a sign of the pains not lessening but rather increasing.”

Then the Buddha said to him, “Kassapa, the seven factors of Awakening are well expounded by me, cultivated, and much developed by me. When they are cultivated and much developed, they conduce to full realization, perfect wisdom, to Nibbāna.”

The Buddha goes on to give the seven factors: (1) mindfulness (*sati*), that is, being aware and mindful in all activities and movements, both physical and mental; (2) investigation of Dhamma (*Dhamma-vicaya*), that is, examining the true nature of all phenomena through one’s own wisdom;¹ (3) energy (*viriya*), or working with determination till the end; (4) rapture or joy (*pīti*), the quality that is quite contrary to a pessimistic, gloomy, or melancholic attitude of mind; (5) tranquillity (*passaddhi*) of both mind and body; (6) concentration (*samādhi*); and (7) equanimity (*upekkhā*), or attaining the stage that no longer demands great physical and mental effort.

¹This term is translated either as referring to the Buddha’s Doctrine or to phenomena (e.g., states, mental objects). Ledi Sayadaw (*The Requisites of Enlightenment*, p. 97; *The Manuals of Buddhism*, p. 202) says this refers to mental factors associated with wisdom. He says, “Just as cotton seeds are milled, carded, etc., so as to produce cotton wool, the process of repeatedly viewing the five *khandas* with the function of *vipassanā-ñāṇa* is called *Dhamma-vicaya*.” In the translation of the Majjhima-nikāya (*Middle Length Discourse of the Buddha*, BPS, 1995), Bhikkhu Bodhi translates this term by “investigation-of-states.”

When the Buddha finished giving the seven factors of Awakening, Mahā-Kassapa said, “Truly, Lord, they are the factors of Awakening!” Rejoicing, he welcomed the words of the Blessed One, and he rose from that illness. Then and there his illness vanished.

On another occasion, the Buddha was staying at the same place at Rājagaha. At that time, Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna was living on the Gijjhakuṭa Hill, the Vulture’s Peak, and he was sick, stricken with severe illness. So the Lord visited him and gave the same discourse on the seven factors of Awakening. Elder Mahā-Moggallāna listened with due respect to the doctrine, and he too recovered from his illness.

On a third occasion, while the Buddha was residing at the same city, staying in the Bamboo Grove, he himself was afflicted with a disease and suffered gravely. Elder Cunda approached the Lord, paid respects to him and attended on him. The Buddha requested Elder Cunda to recite the seven factors of Awakening as he had taught them, and Elder Cunda did so. At the end of the recitation, the Buddha approved and recovered from his illness.

With Ānāpāna and Vipassanā meditation we are developing these seven factors of Awakening in ourselves. We strive for mindfulness and concentration, using energy or determination in our work, doing our best to maintain equanimity towards everything that arises. At times, when we are working properly, there is joy and tranquillity. And all this work we are doing ourselves, investigating these Teachings of the Buddha, the truth concerning reality. So we too, on hearing these seven factors of Awakening, can give our approval.

The Seven Stages of Purification¹

There is another list of seven things that are necessary on the path: the Seven Stages of Purification (*satta-visuddhi*). These are (1) purity of your moral conduct (*sīla-visuddhi*), (2) purity of your mind (*citta-visuddhi*), (3) purity of [right] view or belief (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*), (4) purity of overcoming doubts [about the method and about the Dhamma] (*kaṅkhā-vitarāṇa-visuddhi*), (5) purity of the knowledge of what is the path and what is not the path (*maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*), (6) purity by knowledge and vision of progress on the path (*paṭipādā-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*)—this stage corresponds to the ten stages of Vipassanā knowledge, and finally, (7) purity of knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*)—that is, the stage of Awakening or Enlightenment.

The first two stages of purity of moral conduct and of the mind are achieved in Ānāpāna meditation. So we can begin directly with the third stage. Now, what do we mean by purity of belief? Purity of belief is the same thing as Discriminating Knowledge of Mind and Body (*nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*). This is the ability to understand and appreciate what mind (*nāma*) is and what the body (*rūpa*) is. It is knowing that there is nothing in a sentient being aside from *nāma* and *rūpa*. The ability to realize that and appreciate it is called *diṭṭhi-visuddhi*. The purpose in knowing this is the removal of the concept of self, the mistaken idea that there is a separate self. There is no separate self; there are only the aggregates that make up *nāma* and *rūpa*.

¹This discussion of the Seven Stages of Purification is a talk given by Sayagyi U Tint Yee, Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja, at the International Meditation Centre, Yangon.

Purity of belief is the first stage in insight meditation, Vipassanā. That is why it's necessary to know about *nāma* and *rūpa* before starting the practice of insight meditation. You should be able to differentiate between conventional truth and absolute truth. At first, you understand this in theory, but when you actually meditate, then you find that the physical properties arise, the mind and the mental factors arise, but you cannot find anything else. Only when you reach this stage through your own experience do you truly appreciate this knowledge of *nāma* and *rūpa*. You must develop this appreciation of the knowledge of mind and body in order to remove the wrong view that there is something permanent in them, that there is such a thing as an ego or self. This wrong belief in a permanent self is known in Pāli as *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*.

The next stage is the removal of doubts. It is commonly believed that there is no previous cause to our existence. This wrong view that there is no cause (*ahetuka-diṭṭhi*) is the belief that this is our first existence and that we come into being because of our parents and for no other reason. This view, of course, must be removed.

What is the cause of our being here? There are two causes: (1) the remote cause and (2) the immediate cause. The remote cause is ignorance of the Four Noble Truths and of craving (*taṇhā*). Ignorance of these is the cause of the arising of *saṅkhāras*—the conditioned states that we are a part of. The immediate cause is the food we take in to sustain ourselves as far as the physical properties are concerned. The immediate cause for the mind and mental properties is contact (*phassa*). There is always contact between the senses and the objects associated with them. Because of that contact, consciousness

arises. These, then, are the causes of our present existence. It is only after actually understanding these that we come to Vipassanā knowledge.

In Vipassanā meditation, the object of our meditation is either *rūpa* or *nāma*—we meditate on either the physical properties or on the mind and mental properties. There are four ways of establishing mindfulness: (1) mindfulness of the physical properties (*kāyānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*), (2) mindfulness of sensations (*vedanānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*), (3) contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*), and (4) mindfulness of mental objects (*dhammānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*).

We practise mindfulness of the physical properties through Ānāpāna meditation. The air that we are breathing in and out is a physical property. It arises because of our mental actions, because we want to breathe in, because we want to breathe out.

Then, when we do Vipassanā meditation, we become aware of the sensations, and that is the second type of mindfulness. We observe the sensations. We watch them. What we are doing in reality is to observe the characteristic (*lakkhaṇa*) of each sensation. The object of our mindfulness is the characteristic of the sensations—their behaviour. We observe whether they are permanent or whether they are *not* permanent, whether they are controllable or whether they are *not* controllable. If they aren't permanent, then we know that they're *anicca*. If they aren't controllable, then we know they're *anattā*. And if they are painful, unpleasant, we know they're *dukkha*. Watching the characteristics of these sensations is the purpose of Vipassanā. These are the last two

factors in the Eightfold Noble Path: Right Contemplation and Right Knowledge.

Before you come to the first stage of Vipassanā knowledge, the *udayabbaya* stage of observing arising and vanishing, the knowledge comes to you that for a new sensation to arise, the old sensation has to go. No two sensations can arise together at the same place. You realize in a general way that nothing seems to be permanent. Everything seems to be changing. And sometimes, when you have too much pain, you realize that these sensations don't come according to your desire. They come of their own accord. In that way, you know that they aren't controllable. They come and go of their own accord. In a general way, you start realizing the meaning of impermanence, *anicca*. Then, as you go on observing sensations, and when you feel the sensations properly throughout your body, then as you watch them, you find them arising and vanishing, and you realize this process of becoming and dissolution. That is what is known as the *udayabbaya* stage.

Udaya means "becoming," whereas *-bbaya* (or *vyaya*) means "cessation" or "dissolution." This is the first stage in the realization of Vipassanā knowledge. This knowledge is useful in attaining right belief.

Two beliefs are prevalent. One is that there is no life after this one. After this life, it is finished. But when you know that these physical properties and mental properties, which constitute all the conditioned states throughout the universe, are dying every moment and that there is always a renewal process going on, when you have seen for yourself these two properties combined, then you can, to a certain extent, come to the conclusion that just as this is happening now, it will also

happen in the future. These are momentary births and momentary deaths. Each becoming process is a process of birth, and as soon as there is birth, then there is death. Every moment these properties come into being and go away, and yet, they never cease. Why is that? It is because of *kamma* (volitional actions) and because of the nutrient value which sustains the physical properties.

In this way, we can know to a certain extent that there will be some kind of life after death. The same phenomena will continue. Thus, we can begin to eliminate the wrong view that life ceases with death.

The other view is that there is something permanent. Even though we die, according to this wrong view, something permanent goes on. Here again we can observe that what has gone has gone. There is no such thing as a permanent element. The old physical properties have nothing to do with the new properties. They are different things. Now, what is it that causes the new physical properties to arise? They arise because of *kamma*. Observing this, we can conclude that there is nothing permanent transferred after death. We can make some progress in knowing this to be true. What is actually left after death is this force of *kamma* that gives rise to rebirth. It is not we who are reborn. But how are we connected with that other one? We are connected by the means of *kamma*. As soon as the mind moment ceases at the time of death, the law governing conditioned states is such that there is no gap in between death and rebirth. The next consciousness after death is the new consciousness, the rebirth consciousness. This is the way in which you might say it is not we who are reborn,

but rather, it's just a reflection of our past deeds that gives rise to a new existence.

A long time ago, during Sayagyi's time, someone asked, "If that other person isn't my self, then why should I worry about that person?" All we need to do to find the answer is to look back in the past, and we will find that it's because of the deeds of that so-called "other person" in previous lives that we are here now, and because of those deeds we are suffering. In this way we can come out of our wrong views to some extent.

Most of us are struggling at this stage of observing the becoming and dissolution aspect of our existence, the *udaya-bbaya* stage. This stage is a sort of base on which further progress can be founded. First, there is the preliminary understanding—that is to say, theoretical knowledge. And then, the higher understanding within the same field. It is during this process of understanding rise and fall that the ten hindrances may come. These hindrances are called *upakkilesas*, and they are a very mild form of defilement. They aren't gross or intense types of defilements. Lights may come, for example, or joy comes, or pleasurable feelings. Sometimes knowledge comes. Your intelligence seems to be very sharp. As a result, effort increases. You just want to go on sitting and sitting. Sometimes equanimity comes also. It seems there are no more attachments. Sometimes, there are people who get so equanimous they think they have reached the goal.

This is when you need a teacher who understands and who can tell you that this is just a hindrance to further progress, that you should disregard these things and go on observing *anicca* and contemplating all these hindrances also, to see whether they are permanent or not. It is very simple—

when you come to that stage, you just try to think of *anicca*. If you can think of *anicca*, then it isn't the final stage yet! When you eventually come to the final stage, then the object of contemplation will no longer be on the conditioned; it will be on the unconditioned state, where you can never think of *anicca* or *dukkha*. That type of consciousness won't arise. So you can make the test very easily.

When this *udayabbaya* stage grows, you come to a higher understanding of arising and vanishing than usual. You come to the understanding of the underlying physical properties of sensations—hardness and softness, for example. The physical properties of hardness and softness aren't known to the particles that are combining momentarily and manifesting these properties. It is consciousness that knows them as sensations. Touch-consciousness arises as resultant *kamma*. It is a consciousness without any roots. When you concentrate on a certain spot, your mind door goes there by means of concentration. Because of that concentration, touch-consciousness arises as the resultant. You must contemplate that, observe the behaviour of that sensation. When your *udayabbaya* knowledge has developed to a high degree, then you find these sensations smoothly and evenly. There seem to be no obstructions, and you lose the concept of the conventional aspect of the sensations. You see only in terms of absolutes: not in terms of hands and feet, but in terms of hardness or movement.

At first, the sensations are very slow, but at this stage they become very quick, because you are seeing them in a more concentrated way. This becoming-and-dissolution process quickens. You can go through the body quite easily. As you

go on with this, you see more clearly the dissolution aspect. But even if you don't see that aspect, you shouldn't worry. Go on seeing the becoming aspect, for the dissolution aspect is inherent in the becoming aspect. Death is inherent in birth. Eventually, the time will come when your concentration will be good and you still see more of the dissolution process; wherever you probe, sensations seem to disappear.

At times this is the way you observe your sensations: you look at a sensation, you think in terms of *anicca*, it has gone. You look again, it has gone. In that way, you observe and know your sensations repeatedly. These tingling sensations, for example, you may think of as very tiny little particles fluctuating. There may come a time when you actually experience them as they disappear; they are breaking off, breaking away, just like sand falling down from a cliff. Everything seems to be dissolving. If you see in this way, then you know that you have come to the stage of *bhaṅga-ñāṇa*.

The stage of knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*) is simply the emphasis on the fact that nothing is permanent. It proves how wrong this view is that there is something permanent. When this state is seen clearly, and when you see that all things are dissolving, then it doesn't take you long to see that these things are a sort of danger and that these aggregates aren't nice—there is danger inherent in them because you cannot depend on them.

At this stage also, fear sometimes arises. Not the fear of death, but the fear that the aggregates aren't dependable. This knowledge removes the idea of non-danger, that there can be any safety in the aggregates. We don't think that there is any danger because we feel that our body is quite strong. We are

very attached to our body. We don't realize that at every moment dying takes place. Normally we don't see that, but at this stage we see that everything is constantly falling apart.

Once we realize the danger inherent in these phenomena, these five aggregates, then the attachment to them—thinking of them as something desirable—goes away. There is a change of attitude. Now, the attitude is that these phenomena aren't desirable. At this stage we have developed the attitude that these phenomena which we call ourselves are in reality undesirable. They cannot be depended on. They are always subject to change. And that is why they aren't desirable.

Slowly, you're cutting off the attachment to self and trying to see the suffering (*dukkha*) inherent in the aggregates—the subtle *dukkha*, not the painful aspects of *dukkha* (*dukkha-dukkhatā*, known in Myanmar as “double *dukkha*”). Everyone knows that painful feelings are undesirable. But the *dukkha* we are trying to understand is called *vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*, which means *dukkha* because of constant change.

Then you continue to contemplate these things from the point of view of change (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), or no-self (*anattā*). You use whichever of these three is the most perceptible to you. Usually, it's *anicca* that is most perceptible to us. At this stage, it's like someone who can't swim whose boat capsizes near the shore and who sees a dead body floating there in the ocean. He will hold on to that dead body even though it's undesirable. He knows it's a dead body, but he can't let go or he'll sink and drown.

This is that stage. You know it's undesirable, but *you* can't let go either. You can't stop. If you stop, you sink. So you must go on contemplating the changing nature of the

aggregates, again and again. Try your best to reach the shore. Once you're there, you will be able to disregard that body and let go of it. Even though you see the undesirable aspect, you must keep on contemplating with the aid of *anicca*.

Then comes a state of boredom, being sort of fed up. Usually, there isn't much physical *dukkha* at this stage, so boredom sets in. The students must make more effort, develop more concentration at this stage. In that way, it will be possible to overcome this boredom. The desire to escape from the undesirable will come. You want to escape from all this. When that urge arises, you have to continue contemplating the five aggregates—actually, *one* aggregate will do. Any one of the five. You can concentrate on the physical aspect, or you can concentrate on the aspect of sensations or on perceptions. For the most part, we concentrate on the sensations. So keep knowing *anicca*.

Then comes the stage where you make an additional effort. The desire to escape has arisen. Not to escape from the pain, but from these phenomena you are experiencing. So you put in further effort. Then the *anicca* aspect becomes clearer.

Next comes the ability to view all conditioned states (*saṅkhāras*) with an equanimous attitude, with neither attachment nor with displeasure. At this stage (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*) you don't have to make any special effort in order to experience these *saṅkhāras*. It is almost automatic, and you can view them, observe and contemplate them, for quite a long time without any change in your mental attitude. This stage is free from all obstacles to attaining the stage of entering the Path (*magga*). Once you have come to this stage of Equanimity-Knowledge Regarding Conditioned States, if you

haven't aspired in the past for some special attainment, there is no barrier to going on to the higher states, because the stage of Adaptation-Knowledge (*anuloma-ñāṇa*) will follow. This is the stage supporting the attainment of the Path stage.

Sayagyi U Ba Khin used to give the example of a person hanging on a rope attached to the branch of a tree.¹ He is swinging and trying to get across a stream. So he is swinging and trying to gain enough momentum to be able to let go of the rope and reach the other side. When he has gained enough momentum and he feels sure that he can reach the other side, then he lets go of the rope. This is when one comes to the *gotrabhū* stage, where the object of contemplation changes. Up to this point, the object of contemplation is conditioned states (*saṅkhāras*). At the *gotrabhū* stage, the object of contemplation is directed towards the unconditioned state, the stage of the Path (*magga*).

This, then, is how we can understand theoretically the way in which Vipassanā enables us to realize this Truth of Suffering.

Types of Buddhists

We mentioned earlier, in connection with Kumāra-Kassapa, that he had to prepare for his final release over a very long period of time. Sayagyi U Ba Khin gives a few more details in his booklet *The Real Values of True Buddhist*

¹Cf. *The Path of Purification*, Chapter XXII, ¶6.

Meditation,¹ and these can help us understand what is involved in this process.

Sayagyi defined a Buddhist as a person who takes refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha—the Triple Gem. And there are four types of Buddhists: someone may become a Buddhist because of danger, because of a need for gratification, through birth, or through faith.

Another way of distinguishing Buddhists is by dividing them into two types: (1) those who intend to make a bid for release in this very life, and (2) those who are just accumulating virtues (*pāramīs*) with a view to attaining Awakening in a future life.

Those who intend to make a bid for release in their present lifetime are of four types.² There is the individual who encounters a Buddha in person and who is capable of attaining Awakening through the hearing of a short discourse. As we have seen, this was the case of Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna. Then there is the individual who can attain the Path and Fruits only when a discourse is expounded to him at some considerable length. Such was the case for Venerable Koṇḍañña, who was awakened after the first sermon.

The third type of person is an individual who must make a study of the teachings and practise the provisions made in

¹Printed in *Dhamma Texts* (The Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, U.K.), pp. 53-55.

²See *The Gradual Sayings*, II 138, and *Designation of Human Types*, p. 58. They are discussed by Ledi Sayadaw in *The Requisites of Enlightenment*, pp. 1-10 (*The Manuals of Buddhism*, pp. 165-169).

them for days, months, and years, in order to attain the Path and Fruits. In answer to a question raised by Bodhi-Rājakumāra, the Buddha explained, “I cannot say what exactly should be the time for the complete realization of the Truth. Even assuming that you renounce the world and join the order of the Saṅgha, it might take you seven years.” And he explained that it might take less time, down to a week, a day, or even a fraction of a day. It depends on so many factors.¹

The fourth type of person working for release in his present life is one who, even though he encounters a Buddha’s dispensation (*Buddha-sāsana*) and puts forth the utmost possible effort—both in the study and the practice of the Dhamma—he cannot attain the Paths and Fruits in this lifetime. All he can do is accumulate habits and potential. He cannot obtain release from continued existence (*samsāra*) in his lifetime. If he dies practising the development of calm (*samatha*)—and that means what we have been practising in Ānāpāna—or Vipassanā for insight, he will secure rebirth either as a human being or as a Deva in his next existence. He will be able to attain the Paths and Fruits in that existence, within the present Buddha-sāsana, which is to last five thousand years from the passing away of the Buddha into Mahā-parinibbāna.

We can assume that only those quite mature in the accumulation of virtues (*pāramīs*), such as these four types of individuals, will be inclined to make a bid for release and take seriously to courses of Buddhist meditation. “As a corollary,” Sayagyi said, “we have no doubt that whoever is determined

¹*The Middle Length Sayings*, II 279-284.

to follow strictly and diligently the Noble Eightfold Path through a course of Buddhist meditation under the guidance of a qualified teacher is an individual either of the type to attain Arahatsip after much study and practice, or of the type to work during this lifetime and attain the goal in his next existence.”

Now there are also those we mentioned who are accumulating the perfections in order to become one of the following: a Buddha who will lead others to Awakening, a Buddha who will not teach (Pacceka Buddha), one of the two chief disciples, and one of the eighty leading disciples, or simply an Arahāt.

For a teaching Buddha, there are three types, depending on the predominating factor in their efforts, and each factor requires different lengths of time.¹ A Buddha such as Buddha Gotama, who has wisdom as the predominating factor, must work for four *asaṅkheyyas* and one hundred thousand world cycles. One *asaṅkheyya* is a unit followed by 140 ciphers. A Buddha with faith as the predominating factor, must work for eight *asaṅkheyyas* and one hundred thousand world cycles. The coming Buddha, Metteyya, is of the last type, one who has effort as the predominating factor. This type works for sixteen *asaṅkheyyas* and one hundred thousand world cycles.

A non-teaching Buddha (Pacceka Buddha) must work for two *asaṅkheyyas* and one hundred thousand world cycles.

¹On the length of time for Buddhas, see *The All-Embracing Net of Views*, p. 325. The time required for others is based on their recollection of past lives given in *The Path of Purification*, Chapter XIII, ¶16.

Eventually, Devadatta and the Māra of the time of Buddha Gotama will reach the stage of a Pacceka Buddha.

The chief disciples (*agga-sāvaka*) must work for one *asankheyya* and one hundred thousand world cycles. Each of the eighty leading disciples (*mahā-sāvaka*) have to work for one hundred thousand world cycles. Those who become Ara-hats work for between one hundred and one thousand world cycles, approximately.

So we can see why the Buddha said, “It is difficult to shoot from a distance arrow after arrow through a narrow hole and not miss once. It is more difficult to shoot and penetrate with a tip of hair split a hundred times another piece of hair similarly split. It is more difficult to penetrate to the fact that ‘All this is suffering.’ ”¹

¹*The Kindred Sayings*, V 381f.

DAY EIGHT: EVENING DISCOURSE

The Ten Soldiers of Māra¹

Sensual pleasures are your first army; discontent is called your second; your third is hunger and thirst; the fourth is called craving.

Sloth and torpor are your fifth; the sixth is called fear; your seventh is doubt; hypocrisy and obstinacy are your eighth.

Gain, renown, honour, and whatever fame is falsely received, and whoever both extols himself and disparages others,

That is your army, Namuci; [that is] the striking force of Kaṇha. One who is not a hero cannot conquer it, but having conquered it, one obtains happiness. ...

Seeing the army arrayed all around, and Māra with his elephant, I shall go forth to battle.

That army of yours that the world together with the *devas* cannot overcome, that army of yours I shall break with wisdom, as if breaking an unfired pot with a stone.

Having brought my thought[s] under control, and [making] my mindfulness well-established, I shall

¹This talk is based on informal talks given by Sayagyi U Ba Khin during his ten-day courses at IMC-Yangon in the early 1960's. The talks were transcribed from tape and then translated into English. The original talk was first published in the *Vipassanā Newsletter*, Vol. 9, no. 4 (Nov. 1992).

wander from kindom to kingdom, training many disciples.

Sutta-nipāta vv. 436–439, 442–444¹

These verses come from an account of the Buddha's victory over Māra. This evening's talk is based on a discourse on the soldiers of Māra given by Sayagyi U Ba Khin at the International Meditation Centre, Yangon.

Sayagyi U Ba Khin told his students that they had to have protection and guidance because if they did not, Māra would interfere. He said that he needed to tell the students about Māra, even if that should make Māra angry with him. Otherwise, his instructions would not be complete. We should never underestimate Māra, for he can greatly confuse people. He was even able to go inside the Buddha's monasteries and cause trouble.

On one occasion, Sayagyi pointed out, the Buddha came to the Videha country, which was very big and abounded in people and wealth.² The people living in the city were very numerous. One rich brahman in that place owned a very large mango grove. The Buddha arrived in Mithilā, the capital of Videha, and met this Verañjā brahman when he set foot in his mango grove for the first time. The brahman asked the Buddha one question after another, and the Buddha clarified all his problems. "Excellent, Lord; as, Lord, one might set upright what had been upset, or disclose what had been covered, or bring a light into a dark room, so have I obtained through you the light of knowledge. Please spend this rainy

¹Based on K.R. Norman's translation in *The Group of Discourses*.

²Vinaya-piṭṭaka III 1–11 (*The Book of the Discipline*, I 1–21).

season in this mango grove and allow me to attend on you, venerable sir. I would like to continue to hear the Dhamma from you, venerable sir.”

“It is good, brahman, I will stay here,” the Buddha replied, and the Verañjā brahman sent for food immediately. But then, Māra started to interfere very quickly. He went around the whole town, into all the households, and into each and every person there. He also attacked the Verañjā brahman, who came down with diarrhoea and had to stay in bed. He terrified the rest of the populace as well. He made sure that they wouldn’t venerate the bhikkhus who accompanied the Buddha. Eventually, not a single person in the whole of Videha would donate any food to the Buddha and his disciples. As a result of this, the Buddha had to suffer hunger in the brahman’s mango grove. Ānanda pounded some millet, which is normally food for horses, mixed it with water, and offered this to the Buddha. This was one of three occasions when the Buddha suffered hunger during his lifetime. Even Buddhas can have the results of past bad deeds come to fruition. The main point of this story, however, is that it shows us how debased Māra is. He was around during the time of the Buddha, and he is around today.

Why does Māra act in this manner? When the Buddha gives the Dhamma, his disciples escape from *samsāra* (continued rebirths) and in this way escape from Māra’s influence. Māra’s nature is to stop the spreading of the Dhamma. When a person is to receive the Dhamma, Māra does his utmost to stop this from happening. That’s why it’s not easy to receive the true, pure Dhamma. If someone is taught true *anicca* (awareness of change), Māra immediately

causes wrong *anicca* to arise—something that seems to be *anicca* but isn't.

This is why the Buddha called him *pāpimā*—the evil one. Māra governs all the evil forces. In this way, Māra destroys us. If he manages to do that, you won't achieve your aspiration. But Sayagyi told his students not to be afraid. He said that when he taught the Dhamma, he took responsibility for the people who entrusted their bodies, their minds, and their very lives to him. This was his duty as the teacher.

Sayagyi pointed out that a meditator eliminates the forces left behind by actions done in the past, the *saṅkhāras*, by observing impermanence, *anicca*. The first thing to do is to eliminate the forces left behind by bad actions (*akusala-saṅkhāras*). That is why there is so much discomfort and pain. Once the *akusala-saṅkhāras* are eliminated, once there stock is exhausted, the meditator will be very tranquil and peaceful. Eventually, even the forces left behind by good actions are eliminated, and it is when all the forces coming from past actions are gone that Nibbāna is reached.

This takes time. The *saṅkhāras* become fewer and fewer, but they have to be burned up completely. A student can know through experience how the forces are being diminished, but while the process is going on, it's easy to think that a great many are left and to wonder if they will ever be exhausted. We must not despair. Many people have tried this technique and found a certain degree of peace. When they leave the centre, they want other people to experience that same peace.

Sayagyi pointed out that he had to be very careful and attentive when giving his students Vipassanā. He could not show any partiality when giving the Dhamma to people. He had to enter the battle and fight hard just like his students. It

was only after he found true *anicca* in his own body and mind that his meditation was good. And he warned his students over and over that once the appreciation of *anicca* is good, opposing forces will arise. But he also told them they would be successful.

Sayagyi U Ba Khin liked to tell his students about the difficult conditions under which his own teacher, Sayagyi Saya Thet, worked. When he gave the Dhamma, people couldn't understand at all. When he said, "Concentrate on the top of your head," people didn't know where to look for the top of the head. Everything disappeared for them. When he gave Ānāpāna, some people couldn't find their nostrils. So they had to hold their nostrils with their hands and practise Ānāpāna in this way. When he instructed them to pay attention to their breath, some of them couldn't feel it. They had to hold a piece of gauze in front of their noses and observe the respiration through the movements of the gauze. And then the whole head would disappear. They would complain, "Sayagyi Saya Thet, I don't know where my head is!" Sayagyi Saya Thet would tell them to hold their heads with both hands if they couldn't find them. Then, after some time, they couldn't feel their bodies. The whole body had disappeared.

Similar reactions were experienced by Sayagyi U Ba Khin's students. Their minds would drift off, and they would feel their body had disappeared. Or they would think they could go straight to Nibbāna right away. "If you think your body isn't there any more," he would tell his students, "just hit yourself. It's not difficult. You don't need to come and ask the teacher. Just pinch yourself. Is your body there or not?"

Reactions such as these are called hallucinations or illusions (*vipallāsa*), Sayagyi pointed out. They are unwhole-

some forces that are dormant inside us. We link up to these forces and cling to them. Everyone has such forces inside, and as a meditator's awareness of *anicca* arises, these forces try to push it out as quickly as possible. The force will say, "Go away *anicca*, go away!" But if *anicca* becomes deep rooted in us, these forces will go without fail. Being aware of *anicca* is very special. The element of Nibbāna is contained in it. We should therefore be aware of *anicca* as continuously as possible.

But then Māra comes. There are ten soldiers¹ of Māra. The Buddha preached about them in the Padhāna Sutta.² We have to be aware of the ten soldiers of Māra, and we have to be vigilant. What are the ten soldiers of Māra that stop your meditation?

(1) The first is sensuous craving (*kāma*). Sayagyi said that even though students came to his centre to meditate, they put striving for Nibbāna aside, thinking, "I will befriend Sayagyi. He knows all the influential people. I will ask him for favours." They wanted a good job after passing their exams and finishing school. There were people who came with this intention in their minds. For example, they went to the meditation centre thinking that if they became friendly with the prime minister, they might be given an import licence. There are people like that. Their motivation to meditate is to obtain

¹In Pāli: *senā*, literally: armies.

²Sutta-nipāta, vv. 425–449 (see K.R. Norman's translation of *The Group of Discourses*. Two versions are printed by the Pali Text Society; *The Group of Discourses* II includes technical notes on the text; also published in paperback under the title *The Rhinoceros Horn and Other Early Buddhist Poems*).

material gain. This type of longing for material things is induced by Māra. If this wanting is there, no understanding will arise. Māra disturbs us so that we won't understand the Dhamma. So we must avoid these desires.

This is why we follow Sayagyi's example in having the students say, *Nibbānassa sacci-karaṇatthāya me bhante* (Reverend sir [teach me so that] I may experience the Nibbanic Peace within). When you say this, the implication is: "I have come here to experience Nibbāna and for that reason only." Why do you want to experience Nibbāna? We learn from the texts in the Pāḷi canon that when we die we are almost certain to go to the lower planes of existence. As the Buddha said:¹

Bhikkhus, the people who are reborn as human beings after death are as few as the grains of sand on my finger nail. The people who go to the lower worlds are as numerous as the grains of sand in the whole earth. And what is the reason for this? Not knowing the Four Noble Truths is the reason.

So, if you don't understand the Four Noble Truths, you are going to go to the lower planes of existence for certain. We are teaching you the Dhamma so that you will understand the Four Noble Truths.

Students would say to Sayagyi, "I don't want to understand them" or "We want to go slowly; if we don't understand the Four Noble Truths, never mind." Sayagyi told them that if this was their attitude, he couldn't do anything to help them. He gave the Teachings freely, but he could not force people to understand.

¹Samyutta-nikāya II 263 (*Kindered Sayings*, II 176).

“It isn’t easy for me to give the Dhamma,” Sayagyi told us. “As I said, I have to combat Māra at the same time I’m teaching you. Maybe Māra becomes angry with me at times, but that can’t be helped.”

(2) The second soldier of Māra is discontent (*arati*), not enjoying the solitary, secluded life. Sayagyi told the story of a man who started thinking about leaving the centre. He packed up all his belongings early in the morning while the others were meditating and was planning to leave while Sayagyi checked the students around eight o’clock. He was going to leave as quickly as possible on the first bus he could catch. His luggage was going to be picked up later. For some reason, Sayagyi decided to give the students an hour of strong determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*) earlier than he usually did that day. So the man was caught in the *adhiṭṭhāna* sitting; it tied him down and he couldn’t leave. Then as soon as the *adhiṭṭhāna* sitting was over, the man’s urge to leave was gone.

(3) Not to be satisfied with the food one gets, being burnt by hunger and thirst (*khuppiṭṭhāna*) is the work of the third of Māra’s soldiers. “I’m hunger. I’m hungry.” Now, are you beginning to become hungry too? Sayagyi had a student who was so attached to food that he came here with pine-wood trunks full of food. He said, “Sayagyi, I don’t think I can make it without eating in the evenings.

“Well, if you are hungry, you can eat,” Sayagyi replied, “but try not to do so for the first two or three days and then see.”

“Also, I would like to drink something early in the morning, when I get up,” he said.

“Yes, you can drink something with the first rays at dawn,” Sayagyi said in order to make it easier for him, but he told him to try not to pay attention to hunger.

Another student told Sayagyi when he went to IMC-Yangon, “After three days [of observing the eight precepts] I become dizzy. Throughout my life I have never been able to observe the Uposatha precepts for more than three days. Please make an exception for me in this small matter.”

“In this case I’ll make an exception, of course,” Sayagyi said, and after that the man went to the centre. He meditated for one day and then a second one. Then he got used to it and didn’t feel hungry.

If one finds the Dhamma, there is no longer any hunger. If one doesn’t have the Dhamma, then there is hunger. It is this hunger inside us that makes us feel hungry, but if we gain control over this hunger, then it can’t remain. Suddenly hunger comes—hunger, hunger—and then the meditator experiences the Dhamma, and there is no more hunger.

(4) The fourth soldier of Māra is craving (*taṇhā*)—the craving to experience a variety of tastes in food and drink. You may find that when you are on a vegetarian diet as we are here you have a craving for chicken or meat. You might be tempted to do as some Germans did who couldn’t cope with the food at one of the leading meditation centres in Yangon. They went out into town and bought fried noodles.

Some of these desires become irresistible. Therefore, we follow Sayagyi’s example in making every effort to serve good food on our courses. Our cooks are inspired by the example of Sayamagyi, who made every effort to serve deli-

cious food when she was in charge of the kitchen at IMC-Yangon during Sayagyi U Ba Khin's lifetime.

If you eat a great variety of tasty dishes, what happens? Will the desire for different tastes not come up anymore? Will it quieten down? The food we eat has to come in contact with our tongue. Can we eat it without enjoying its taste? No one except the Arahats can do that.

You come here to do away with desire altogether. You are giving up defilements so that desires diminish. You are getting rid of impurities.

If you close your eyes, the desire for physical shapes doesn't arise, does it? You can eliminate the desire for sounds, also. No one comes here with a radio playing songs of popular singers. You won't hear them here, even if you want to. As for the desire for scents, no one here wears perfumes and scents, so that desire, too, is checked. There is no opportunity for physical touch, so that desire is eliminated. But can you avoid tastes? You avoid experiencing tastes with your tongue only if you stop eating. You can call the doctor and make him inject you with glucose, etc. Otherwise, the only way to give your body energy is through eating food, which has to pass through your mouth and over your tongue. If we reduce the tastiness of food a little, does the craving for tastes diminish? If I talk of a hunk of cooked pork, desire for it comes up in you immediately. But we have come here to eradicate this craving, this defilement, and you are in the process of doing just that. We control the desire for food here in order not to strengthen this craving in you, and we do that by limiting ourselves to vegetarian food. If you try to rid yourselves of defilements so completely as to annihilate them altogether, you

have to put aside everything. Māra is bringing up the craving for food deep inside you.

We don't serve an evening meal here for the old students, and this makes things much easier. You can see how the people in the kitchen have to cook every morning, and they are relieved not to have to cook an evening meal for everyone as well. For you, too, it's much better, for if you eat at night, you will certainly become sleepy. Can't you be satisfied without eating in the afternoon? If you eat enough at lunch time—maybe double the normal amount—then the body will be satisfied with that.

(5) The fifth soldier of Māra is sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), and it makes you live in a sort of apathy, stupor, and drowsiness. That is normal. Even Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna, one of the Buddha's two chief disciples, was struck by this. You, too, feel drowsy at times when you are meditating. Some students even fall asleep in the sitting position.

Quite a few of the people who meditate here snore, too. This is the attack of *thīna-middha*, sloth and torpor. It isn't possible to avoid them altogether.

When Vipassanā becomes strong, *Nibbāna-dhātu* (the element of Nibbāna) arises. Then you will meet with the unwholesome forces that lie dormant in you. When these forces arise, they manifest themselves as smoke, and when the haze becomes dense, you feel drowsy. You nod. Never mind. Let it be. When it's gone, start again immediately and breathe intentionally. You have lost your *samādhi*. This is escape from within. When you escape in this way, your *samādhi* goes, and you have to collect your attention again at the nos-

trils. Breathe quite sharply, and then go back to natural breathing.

In some cases the appreciation of *anicca* becomes very good, and as you understand the concept of *anicca*, you find it in reality in your body. As you find it in the body, your understanding settles deeply into your mind. When your mind becomes bright and light, the strong forces inside you react. They explode and cause trouble, and then what happens? *Anicca* disappears. You stumble. "I don't know what happened," you say. Sometimes you lose courage like this, suddenly.

There are two ways to deal with this problem: you can build up your *samādhi* again in the way we described just now, or you can go outside and whistle something to yourself and take it easy for a while. You must do something so these forces will die away. The smoke and the haze in your mind will settle down, and then you must go to work again. Don't go to sleep. These are the two ways of dealing with this situation once and for all. They are practical and very important. That sort of drowsiness always comes with meditation.

Now, what is underneath the human plane in the thirty-one planes of existence? There are the hells, the animal world, the *peta* (ghost) world and the *asura* (demon) world. Everyone has *akusala-kamma* (wrong actions of the past) inside that will result in rebirth in the hells, the animal world, the *peta* world, or the *asura* world. If you observe these *akusala* (bad) forces in you from now on, they will come to an end, and only then will the *kusala* (good) forces surface. The forces of *akusala-kamma* that cause rebirth in the hells are as hot as hell fire. If the forces that lead to rebirth in the animal world come up, you

feel sluggish, heavy, and stupid. The forces of *kamma* that would take you to the *peta* world make you feel like a hungry ghost. You may think that this won't happen to you, but it could. Don't think it couldn't.

At the moment an *akusala* force leaves you, you will encounter difficulties. You will have a rough time with hardness and stiffness coming up. Each force has its own nature and manifests itself accordingly. When it comes up, you have to keep knowing that, with *anicca* in your body, this will go away. Don't just talk about *anicca*. Don't just talk about arising and vanishing. There has to be this knowledge of *anicca* that comes from truly knowing the arising and dissolution of physical phenomena through experience. In this way, you will be victorious.

(6) The sixth soldier of Māra is fear (*bhīru*). Because of this you don't want to be alone; it makes you fearful and frightened. Sayagyi spoke of people who weren't able to sit in the Dhamma Hall in IMC-Yangon. They had to go to another room. Sometimes they would look for a companion to go with them. Such things happen. One becomes afraid without any apparent reason. This comes from inside.

One of Sayagyi's students was afraid of staying alone. She lived in a huge house and spent about one hundred thousand kyats to do up the back of her house. No one in Myanmar had a bathroom like the one she had. She was very up-to-date. Her house was vast, but she didn't dare stay in her huge house by herself. She always had to have someone with her. Eventually, she came to meditate under Sayagyi's guidance, but she also brought her servant with her. She even brought the servant along to the meditation room to wait for her.

“Sayagyi,” she said, “allow me to meditate with the light on.” So, he kept the light on for her, but then she also had to have someone sitting right behind her. It is understandable that a person may get frightened at times while meditating, but this lady also left the toilet door open when she went to the toilet. Someone had to sit by the door and wait.

It was very difficult. She was always frightened and couldn’t remain by herself. When she was left alone she became very peculiar. Fear crept right through her and she shivered.

When she came to meditate at IMC-Yangon, Sayagyi gave her the Dhamma, and he had to give her a large room as well. She needed a trolley for all the things she brought along from her house. She came with a table and all sorts of things as well as an attendant. On the second course, she brought along fewer things. And then, when she came for the third time, she stayed in a small cell. Not only did she stay in the small room, she also no longer needed any attendants. She stayed there in the dark cell by herself. Later, she came to the centre every evening. Every month, without fail, she came for a ten-day retreat. She benefited greatly from this meditation. She was foremost in being afraid, but after she had come to Sayagyi, she was cured of her fear.

(7) The seventh soldier of Māra is doubt (*vicikicchā*). “Will I get the Dhamma or won’t I?” Everybody probably has this doubt. “Will I achieve anything in this meditation?” Of course you will achieve something. But even though you have achieved something, after some time you feel that you also want to attain the *magga* and *phala* states (Path and Fruition States). Sayagyi pointed out that some people thought it was

easy to attain these states in Myanmar. People would come to his centre who wanted to “drop” [that is to say, experience Nibbāna] even before they started. He suggested they go to meditation centres where the teachers claimed to have people attain Nibbāna in no time at all.

The important thing, Sayagyi said, are the *akusala* forces, the doubts, the defilements that lie dormant in us. We have to cleanse ourselves of these forces. This is what is important.

(8) The eighth soldier of Māra is pride and arrogance (or: hypocrisy and obstinacy, *makkha* and *thambha*). When you obtain a small amount of insight into the Dhamma, your pride arises. You have found the Dhamma inside your body, and your appreciation is still growing. When you have purified yourselves of some forces you think, “I’m good!” And pride arises in you. You look over there and think, “That other person hasn’t understood much yet. I’ll help him a little.” Sayagyi told the story of a student of his who had been a football player and who began meditating in 1953. He was very truculent, very tough. But still, he meditated, and his appreciation of the Dhamma was very good. Sometimes he saw blue rays emanating from his body while he meditated or while he was lying down in his cell. But other meditators, such as another man meditating at the centre at that time, couldn’t meditate continuously. He would ask for a little bucket; then he fetched some water, took a broom, and started to clean.

“Come, come,” Sayagyi said to him. “I invited you to the Centre so that you could attain Nibbāna, so that you would meditate, not so you could perform some small meritorious deeds that will give results in the Deva world. You came here

so I could help you acquire merit that doesn't result just in rebirth in the Deva planes. You came to eradicate even the *kusala-kamma* that gives rebirth in the Deva world—even to get rid of the good *kamma* that would take you to the Brahmā planes (the highest planes of existence). Don't do this kind of work to acquire merit."

The former football player developed suddenly and rapidly. At that time, the Dhamma Hall at IMC-Yangon hadn't been built yet. There was a small old hut that was on the property when the land was bought. Sayagyi and some of his disciples were sitting around the hut talking one morning when the football player came out of his meditation cell. "Sayagyi, look!" he said, and he lifted his loungyi up to his thighs. There were big lumps from his thighs down to the calves. Forces inside were kicking up. "Sayagyi, look, look!" he said. "These inner forces came up with so much violence. You see?" Then he told the other meditators, "You too should work hard like me."

But Sayagyi warned us that we should not go around talking about the Dhamma while on a meditation course. If you have questions, ask the teacher. If you want to discuss things, come to the teacher. If you go and talk to other meditators about your achievements, there's always pride and therefore ego involved. This man thought he was very good and that others needed his help.

Another student, who was at IMC-Yangon at the same time as the football player, was a calm, tranquil man. "Well, my friend, I'm taking it easy," he told him.

"It's like the story of the hare and the tortoise," Sayagyi told the football player. "You are the hare and you think your-

self very quick. But the tortoise will catch up slowly and steadily.”

The next day, the former football player couldn't get *anicca*. It had disappeared, and he didn't even know where to look for it. “Please help me, Sayagyi!” he said. The other student worked slowly and steadily and he developed up to a very good level, but the former football player was getting nowhere.

Sayagyi told stories about these other students so that his students could understand the nature of forces. It was quite a headache for him at the time. Why couldn't that man we mentioned earlier get the Dhamma? Sometimes Sayagyi saw him washing the walls or sweeping the floor. He didn't meditate. “Well, ” Sayagyi said to himself, “I'll have a look at this man.” And he found that the man was doing something different. He was sitting in the cell in the pagoda where the Buddha statue is now. That night Sayagyi opened the door with a sudden push and caught him. He was counting beads in his cell. “Give them to me,” Sayagyi said and took them away.

While he was counting beads, the ogre connected with his beads influenced the man. When people count beads, certain kinds of force tend to come into them. Not all beads are like this, of course, but the ones that are received from some masters are possessed with guardian ogres (*yakkhas*). That's why Sayagyi had to take his beads away from the man. Only then could he meditate and get the Dhamma.

“Whether or not the force gets angry with me in such cases, I don't know,” Sayagyi said. And he suggested that we keep a low profile when the Dhamma ripens in us. He said we

should keep up our own meditation, living a quiet, modest life.

(9) The ninth soldier of Māra is prestige and fame (or: gain, renown, honour, and whatever fame is falsely received; *lābha, siloka, sakkāra, micchāladdha*). When a teacher becomes famous, he receives gifts. Sayagyi pointed out that he too was given respect and gifts. He had to restrict this quite a bit so that no pride would arise in him. Similarly, the achievements and knowledge the students gain on a meditation course can be a reason for being proud, but they should control themselves and suppress pride.

When Sayagyi started to teach, only a few people who were directly connected with his office went to IMC-Yangon. That centre was built as a place where his office staff could meditate in their free time. When the centre was started, Sayagyi didn't think first about money; the first thing he did was teach the Dhamma. Any one of the office staff who meditated for ten days became a member of the association associated with the centre. The admission fee was ten-days' meditation. To be admitted they didn't have to pay a penny. They only needed to meditate regularly and maintain their Dhamma.

This is how Sayagyi's centre was established. "You can't print money," Sayagyi said, "but you can practise the Dhamma. That's what I believe in. So, because of this, I myself don't have any money." Nobody at his centre was rich, he said. He didn't own the centre, even though it was called U Ba Khin's meditation centre. Even though he was the teacher, he didn't own it. If the Vipassanā Association of the Accountant General's Office had decided to send him away,

he would have had to go. Once a year Sayagyi would step down, and since he was always re-elected president, he assumed that position. But he said if the other members of the association elected someone they thought was better than him that was all right with him. If someone at the meeting didn't like me and said, "Sayagyi talks too much, he shouts too much. We want someone else," then he would go. He made this clear right from the beginning. "I can also go to America or some other place," he said, "and teach the Dhamma there."

(10) The tenth soldier of Māra is the mixing of wrong Dhamma with pure Dhamma for material gain (or: whoever both extols himself and disparages others, *yo c' attānaṃ sanukkaṃse pare ca avajānati*). This danger arises when one gains materially from teaching the Dhamma through the offerings he is given. Because there is wrong Dhamma, there is profiteering. One praises oneself and talks deprecatingly about others. Sayagyi mentioned the case of a foreign woman who came to him and started to talk about others. He stopped her immediately. "We don't talk about others," he explained, "whatever they may say about us."

Some people aren't able to continue to teach the pure, real Dhamma once they start getting offerings and gifts. In order to gain many disciples and to please them, they start to preach and teach fake Dhammas that the Buddha didn't give. This happens due to greed for material gain.

Remember these ten dangers, which we call the ten soldiers of Māra.

DAY NINE: MORNING DISCOURSE

Right Veneration, Right Protection, Right Concentration

*Attadattham paratthena bahunā pi na hāpaye
Attadattham abinñāya sadatthapasuto siyā.*

Let a man not neglect his own good for the good of another, however important. A man should learn what is good for himself and apply himself thereto with diligence.

Dhammapada v. 166

The Story of Attadattha¹

This verse was given by the Buddha in connection with the bhikkhu Attadattha whose name means “Own Good” or “Own Welfare.” At the end of his life, the Buddha informed the bhikkhus that in three months he would pass into Nibbāna. Seven hundred bhikkhus who weren’t yet fully Awakened were deeply moved. They stayed near the Buddha and whispered to one another, “What are we to do?”

Attadattha, however, thought to himself, “I’m not yet free from the passions. I will strive with all my might to attain Arahatship while the Buddha is still alive.” The other bhikkhus noticed that Attadattha was no longer with them and asked him, “Why do you avoid our company and no longer talk with us?” And they took him to the Buddha and laid the matter before him. The Buddha asked Attadattha why he was

¹See *Buddhist Legends*, II 366.

acting the way he was. Attadattha explained, and the Buddha praised him saying, “Bhikkhus, whoever sincerely loves me should be like the Elder Attadattha. Only those who fulfil the higher and lower Dhamma honour me, not those who honour me with perfumes and garlands. You should follow the example of the Elder Attadattha.”

The Buddha’s Advice to Ānanda

There is another incident in the life of the Buddha concerning right veneration.¹ At the end of his life, when the Buddha was on his death bed, there were many marvels. He lay on a couch between two Sāl trees which broke out in full bloom even though it wasn’t the season. And the blossoms rained down on the Buddha in worship of him. Celestial coral flowers and heavenly sandalwood powder rained down from the sky; there was the sound of heavenly voices, and heavenly instruments made music, all in worship of the Buddha. But the Buddha said to Ānanda, “It’s not in this manner, Ānanda, that the Tathāgata is respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped, and honoured in the highest degree. It is rather when a bhikkhu or bhikkhunī, a layman or lay woman abides by the Teaching, lives uprightly in the Teaching, walks in the way of the Teaching, then is the Tathāgata respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped, and honoured in the highest degree. Therefore, Ānanda, abide by the Teaching, live uprightly in the Teaching, walk in the way of the Teaching—thus you should train yourselves.”

¹*Dialogues of the Buddha*, II 150f.

When Sayagyi was alive, we used to go to pay respects to him before and after the period of the rains' retreat and on important days such as his birthday. And we would take various offerings. Sayagyi liked to tell the story of Attadattha and point out that practising the Teaching was the best way to pay respects. "I praise only this resolution to sit for one hour, the *adhiṭṭhāna*," he would say to us. So we would meditate with him for one hour, and only after the sitting would he give his blessings.

The Tittira Jātaka¹

This is not to say that proper respect towards our teachers and elders is unimportant, however. If we are practising the Dhamma correctly, then we will naturally have respect for our teachers and elders and will follow their advice. There is a story in the Jātakas, the stories of the past lives of the Buddha, that illustrates this point. Here is the verse given by the Buddha in connection with the Tittira Jātaka (No. 37):

Those who honour age are versed in Truth.

They are praised in this life and earn bliss hereafter.

This religious discourse was given by the Buddha to a Community of Bhikkhus headed by Sāriputta, the First Chief Disciple. It was after a period that the Buddha had spent at Vesālī when he was going by stages to Sāvatti. Now at that time, the followers of the bhikkhus belonging to a certain clique of six (*sabaggi*) went ahead of the Community of Bhikkhus headed by the Buddha. And they took over lodgings

¹This story is also given in *The Book of the Discipline*, V 224-227.

and beds, saying, “This will be for our preceptor, this will be for our teacher, this will be for us.”

When Venerable Sāriputta arrived later on, the lodgings and beds had all been taken over. As his followers couldn’t find a bed for him, he spent the night at the foot of a tree near the Buddha’s lodging. The Buddha got up just before dawn, and as he came out he coughed. Venerable Sāriputta coughed also. “Who’s there?” asked the Buddha. “It is I, Sāriputta, Lord,” was the answer.

“Why are you sitting here, Sāriputta?” asked the Buddha. Then Sāriputta explained what had happened. So the Buddha called the bhikkhus together and asked them if what he heard was true, and they confirmed it. So he rebuked them, saying, “Bhikkhus, this doesn’t rouse faith in the faithless or increase faith in the faithful; rather it confirms those who don’t have faith in their lack of faith and harms some of the faithful.”

After he had administered the rebuke and given a talk on the Dhamma, he addressed the bhikkhus again, “Bhikkhus, who is worthy of the best seat, the best water, the best alms food?” Some bhikkhus said that it was one who came from a warrior-noble family. Others said that it was one from a brahman family or from a householder family. Others said it was one who was versed in the Abhidhamma. Still others said it should be one who had attained the absorption states (*jhānas*), or a Sotāpanna, or a Once-Returner, or a Non-Returner, or an Arahāt.

After all the bhikkhus had given their opinion, the Buddha said that none of these should be taken into consideration. He said that it was only seniority that determined who should be shown respect, who should enjoy the best lodging, water, and

food. This rule was laid down by the Buddha and is still respected by the Saṅgha today.

To make his point clear, the Buddha pointed out that Sāriputta, one of his Chief Disciples, who had set rolling the Wheel of Minor Truth, who deserved a lodging next to the Buddha's, had had to spend the night without lodging. And the Buddha said that in former days even animals had known better than to show such disrespect. And he told the story of the three friends.

There was once a large banyan tree in the Himalayas with three friends who lived under it. One was a partridge, one a monkey, and one an elephant. They were often rude and disrespectful, and they lived without consideration for one another.

Then they thought, "If only we could find out which of us is the oldest, then we could honour, respect, revere, and venerate him and follow his advice."

So the partridge and the monkey asked the elephant, "How far back can you remember?" "When I was a calf," the elephant replied, "I used to walk over this banyan tree and its topmost branch scratched my stomach."

Then the partridge and elephant asked the monkey, "What about you?" "When I was a baby," answered the monkey, "I used to sit on the ground and nibble the topmost shoots of this banyan tree."

Finally, the monkey and elephant asked the partridge, "How far back can you remember?" And the partridge said, "In a certain place, there was a big banyan tree. I ate one of its

seeds and voided it in this place, and this banyan tree grew from that seed. So I am older than you.”

Then the monkey and elephant said to the partridge, “You are older than us. We will honour, respect, revere, and venerate you and follow your advice.” The partridge had the monkey and elephant take the five precepts for moral conduct and took them himself. Then, they were courteous and respectful to one another and lived in mutual consideration. When they died, they were reborn in a happy destination, a heavenly world.

At the end of the story, the Buddha said that this came to be known as “The Partridge’s Life Divine,” and he quoted the verse we started with:

Let a man not neglect his own good for the good of another, however important. A man should learn what is good for himself and apply himself thereto with diligence.

Dhammapada v. 166

“Now, bhikkhus,” the Buddha concluded, “these animals could be courteous and respectful to one another and live with mutual consideration. Try and copy them.”

Stories such as these are often told in Buddhist countries. Young people in Myanmar, for example, learn them at school, and through them, they learn right conduct.

After concluding this story, the Buddha identified the three friends. The monkey was now Sāriputta, the elephant was now the other Chief Disciple, Moggallāna, and the partridge was now the Buddha himself.

In the verse pronounced by the Buddha, he speaks of the results of right conduct for the individual. But we are told that when Sāriputta told him why he had spent the night outside, the Buddha thought to himself, “Even now, when I am still alive, the bhikkhus lack courtesy and discipline. What won’t they do when I am dead and gone?” So we can see that he was also concerned for the sake of the Dhamma. When moral conduct is missing, not only is it harmful to individuals, it’s also harmful to the Teachings.

Protecting Oneself and Protecting Others¹

Elsewhere, the Buddha spoke of what we can expect if there is no respect for right action. Because “people are infatuated with unlawful lusts, overwhelmed by depraved longings and overcome by wrong doctrines,” they encounter three destroyers: war, famine, and pestilence.² It doesn’t matter during which period of history we live, or under what system of government, the same thing holds true. War, famine, and pestilence will result from immoral lusts, depraved longings and obsession with wrong doctrines.

If we look at the modern world, the twentieth century has seen many kinds of wars: two world wars, small wars, civil wars, cold wars, hot wars, and every year there are more to add to the list. Famine occurs with regularity, due to lack of rain, crop failures, over-population, etc. And pestilence can be seen in the form of new diseases, and more resistant forms of

¹This discussion is from “What Leads Them On They Know Not” by Myanaung U Tin (*Light of the Dhamma*, VI 3, pp. 14-16).

²*The Gradual Sayings*, I 141-143.

old diseases. No sooner do we seem to find a cure than something else menaces our health.

The best answer to these problems as taught by the Buddha is for us to develop in morality, in concentration, and insight. This includes developing the four Divine Abidings, the Brahma-vihāra: loving kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). As the Buddha said in the *Mettā Sutta*, “Just as a mother would protect with her life her own son, her only son, so one should cultivate an unbounded mind towards all beings, and loving kindness towards all the world.”¹

If enough people felt this kind of unselfish love, we can well imagine that the wealth and energy of the world would be better directed to serving the needs of mankind. But only after the minds and hearts of many people have been changed can much progress be expected. And how would we be able to help others change if we haven’t developed in the right direction ourselves?

The attitude that we should develop was illustrated by the Buddha in another story which he told concerning the right attitude to be developed. The Buddha told this story at the time the bhikkhus of Kosambī caused a schism in the Order of Bhikkhus.

A certain bhikkhu was accused by another of having committed a minor offence. The accused bhikkhu didn’t consider what he had done to be an offence. But the other bhikkhu insisted that it was, and, gaining support from his comrades and intimates, he had the bhikkhu suspended. The

¹*The Group of Discourses*, verses 149f.

supporters of the suspended bhikkhu sided with him. Twice the Buddha tried to reason with the two factions in order to prevent a schism, but to no avail. Then he told the story of Dīghāvu.

The Story of Dīghāvu¹

At a time when Brahmadatta was king of Bārāṇasi, he annexed the kingdom of Kosala to his empire and put the king and queen of Kosala to death. On the way to the place of execution, the king of Kosala saw his son Prince Dīghāvu in the crowd in disguise. Seeing his son, the king said, “Don’t you, dear Dīghāvu, look at the long or look at the short, for wrathful moods are allayed by non-wrath.” The people thought he had gone mad and was speaking nonsense.

Later, Prince Dīghāvu managed to get a place in the service of King Brahmadatta. One day, while hunting in the forest, the king lost his way. The only person still with him was Prince Dīghāvu. The king felt tired and went to sleep, resting his head on the prince’s lap. The prince wanted to avenge his parents’ death and twice drew his sword from its sheath. But each time, his father’s words came back to him, and he put away his sword.

Then King Brahmadatta dreamed that the son of the king of Kosala attacked him with a sword, and frightened and agitated he woke up. He related his dream to his servant. Then the prince said to him, “I am Prince Dīghāvu, the son of the king of Kosala. You have done us much wrong. You annexed

¹*The Book of the Discipline*, IV 489–498. Cf. *Jātaka* Nos. 371, 428, and *Buddhist Legends*, I 177.

our kingdom. You killed my parents. I could show you my wrath now.” King Brahmadatta said, “Grant me my life, dear Dīghāvu.” And the prince complied with the king’s request. In turn, the king promised not to harm him.

When they returned to the palace, the king asked the prince to explain his father’s words. Prince Dīghāvu said, “ ‘Don’t look at the long’ means, don’t prolong enmity. ‘Don’t look at the short’ means, don’t hastily break with a friend. ‘Wrathful moods are allayed by non-wrath’ means, my parents were killed by a king, but if I were to deprive the king of his life, those who desired his welfare would deprive me of my life. But now that I grant you your life, you, in turn, grant me my life: thus is wrath settled by non-wrath.”

King Brahmadatta was so pleased that he gave back the kingdom of Kosala to Prince Dīghāvu and his own daughter into the bargain. Concluding the story, the Buddha said, “Now, bhikkhus, if such is the forbearance and gentleness of kings who wield the sceptre, who wield the sword, let your light shine forth so that you who have gone forth in this Doctrine and discipline that are well taught may be equally forbearing and gentle.” And for the third time the Buddha said to the factions of bhikkhus, “Enough, bhikkhus; no strife, no quarrels, no contention, no disputing.” But the bhikkhus wouldn’t listen to the Buddha. So the Buddha thought to himself, “These foolish men are as though infatuated; it’s not easy to persuade them.” And he left.

The next day, the Buddha spoke the following verses to the Order of Bhikkhus:¹

No one considers the many voices of the ordinary people to be foolish. When the Order is divided, no one considers it divided.

Through confusing the speech of wise men, the reciters live off [their] words. While they crave with their mouths wide open, they do not know where they are led.

“He abused me, he struck me, he conquered me, he robbed me.” Those who bear grudges like this do not calm their hatred.

“He abused me, he struck me, he conquered me, he robbed me.” Those who do not bear grudges like this calm their hatred.

For [thoughts of] hatred are never calmed through hatred in this world. They are calmed rather through freedom from hatred. This is the age-old teaching.

Others, too, do not know that we come to an end here, but those who have knowledge in this respect, thereby their quarrels cease.

Those who break the bones of others, who take life, who steal cows, horses, and wealth, who plunder kingdoms—even they are united. Why can you not be so too?

¹*The Book of the Discipline*, IV 499f.; *Jātaka Stories*, III 290; *The Middle Length Sayings*, III 198f.

If you can obtain a zealous companion, an associate of good disposition, [who is] resolute, overcoming all dangers, one should wander with him, with elated mind, mindful.

If you cannot obtain a zealous companion, an associate of good disposition, [who is] resolute, [then] like a king quitting the kingdom [which he has] conquered, one should wander solitary like an elephant in the elephant forest.

It is better to live alone. There is no companionship with the foolish. One should live alone, doing no evil, unconcerned, like an elephant in the elephant forest.

After saying these verses to the Order of Bhikkhus, the Buddha went away to stay alone in the Pārileyya forest, for he realized there was nothing he could do to reconcile those bhikkhus. The dissension between the bhikkhus spread to their lay followers, dividing the whole of Kosambī into two camps and causing great misery to the bhikkhus and the laymen. Eventually, however, the two parties realized their folly and resolved their differences and lived in peace and harmony. Then the Buddha came back to them.

The world today is full of quarrelling factions. Some see the world as divided between two powerful blocs with small countries caught helplessly in between. The Myanmar proverb compares them to tufts of grass caught between two fighting buffaloes.

How can we help to make the world a better place to live in? If we look at the example of the Buddha, we can see that he tried his best to help the bhikkhus to see the error of their

ways. But he didn't use his position to force them to change. When it became clear that there was nothing more the Buddha could do, he didn't stay there, but went his own way, waiting until such time as the bhikkhus would listen to him again.

We too should realize our own limitations. And until such time as we reach full Awakening, we should endeavour to rise above selfish considerations. And we can make an effort to prevent, as far as it lies in our power, the coming of the three traditional destroyers: war, famine, and pestilence.

Now what is the best way for us to do this? Of course we will want to apply the Teachings of the Buddha in our everyday life. We will want to practise generosity, keep the moral precepts, and treat all men as our brothers. But in order to do all this, we will need to make progress in our concentration and insight. If we remain ignorant ourselves, we will never be able to help our fellow man.

The Buddha gave us a guideline for this in the Discourse on Establishing Mindfulness.¹ His advice can be summarized in two lines of verse:²

*Attanam rakkhanto param rakkhati,
Param rakkhanto attanam rakkhati.*

By protecting oneself, one protects others.
By protecting others, one protects oneself.

¹*The Middle Length Sayings*, I 70-82.

²Based on the Buddha's concluding words in the discourse about the two acrobats (*The Kindred Sayings*, V 148f.).

The Story of the Two Acrobats¹

The Buddha told the bhikkhus the following story: once there were two acrobats who did their act using a bamboo pole. One day, the master said to his apprentice Medakathālika, “Now get on my shoulders and climb up the bamboo pole.” When the apprentice had done as he was told, the master said, “Now protect me well and I’ll protect you. By protecting and watching each other in that way, we’ll be able to show our skill, make a good profit, and you’ll get down from the pole safely.”

But Medakathālika said, “Not so, master. You should protect yourself, and I too will protect myself. By keeping myself secure, I’ll be protecting you. Self-protected and self-guarded in this way, we’ll protect each other by protecting ourselves and will safely perform our feats.”

This discourse deals with the relations between ourselves and our fellow beings, between individuals and society. It sums up in an admirable way the Buddhist attitude to the problems of individual and social ethics, of egoism and altruism. The two sentences which summarize the teaching supplement each other and shouldn’t be taken separately: “By protecting oneself, one protects others. By protecting others, one protects oneself.”

Today, social activity is greatly stressed, so people may be tempted to quote, in support of their ideas, only the second phrase: “By protecting others, one protects oneself.” A one-sided quotation such as this would misrepresent the Buddha’s

¹This section is based on “The Story of Two Acrobats” by Venerable Nyanaponika Thera (*Light of the Dhamma*, II 1, pp. 15-18).

teaching, however. The Buddha expressly recommended the apprentice's method. One must first carefully watch one's own steps if one wishes to protect others from harm. He who is sunk in the mire himself cannot help others out of it. In that sense, self-protection forms the indispensable basis for the protection and help given to others. But self-protection isn't selfish protection. It's self-control, ethical and spiritual self-development.

Certain great truths have an increasing range of significance and are applicable on various levels of understanding and reality. They are valid on various planes of existence. After reaching the first or second level, we will be surprised that again and again new vistas open themselves to our understanding and are illumined by that truth. This is the case of these two phrases.

“By protecting oneself, one protects others.” The truth of this statement begins at a very simple and practical level. It is obvious that on the material level, protecting your health will go far in protecting the health of our environment. Caution and circumspection in all our actions and movements will protect others from any harm that could come to them through our carelessness or negligence.

On another level, moral self-protection will safeguard other individuals and society against our own unrestrained passions. If the three roots of all unwholesome acts—greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*)—take root in our hearts, what grows from these roots will spread far and wide, and like a jungle creeper it will suffocate the healthy growth all around.

On the other hand, if we protect ourselves from these three roots of unwholesome acts, our fellow men will be safe from our greed for possessions or power, our unrestrained lust and sensuality, from envy and jealousy; they will be safe from the destructive or even murderous consequences of our hate and enmity—from our outbursts of anger, from an atmosphere of bad humour and quarrelsomeness that can make life unbearable for those around us.

Greed and hate also have infectious power. If we think only of getting more, we will rouse or strengthen these possessive instincts in others too. Our bad example may become the standard for our environment—our children, the younger generation, for example. We may also persuade others to join us in satisfying the desire to own more and more. If we are full of sensual desires, we may kindle that fire of lust in others too. If we act with hatred, we will make others hate in return. Greed and hate are like contagious diseases. We will protect ourselves and others as well if we make ourselves as immune as possible.

As for the third root of unwholesome acts, we all know how through delusion or ignorance much harm can be done to others through the stupidity, thoughtlessness, illusions, and delusions of a single person.

Without wisdom and knowledge, attempts at protecting oneself and others will mostly fail. One will see the danger after it's too late. One won't make provision for the future. One won't know the right, effective means for protecting and helping. Therefore, self-protection through wisdom and knowledge is of the greatest importance.

History has shown us that great mass delusions of a very destructive nature have often been started or kindled by a single person or a small group of people.

If we leave untouched the actual or potential sources of social evil within ourselves, any external social activity of ours will be either futile or glaringly incomplete. So if we are motivated by a spirit of social responsibility, we cannot shirk the hard task of self-protection, and that means we must work for moral and spiritual self-development. He who earnestly devotes himself to moral self-protection and spiritual self-development will be a strong force for good in the world, even without engaging in any external social activity. His quiet example alone will give help and encouragement to many by showing that the ideals of a selfless and harmless life can be actually lived and aren't only subjects of sermons and Dhamma talks.

Now we come to the next level in the interpretation of our text. It is expressed in the following words of the *sutta* : "And how does one, by protecting oneself, protect others? By repeated practice, by meditative development, by frequent practice of moral self-protection."

Moral self-protection will lack reliability as long as it starts to function only after a struggle with motives or if it has to be enforced against conflicting habits. The outcome of the struggle may sometimes go against our good intentions, or we may fail to enforce them on deep-rooted habits within. Only when moral self-protection becomes a spontaneous function will it give real safety to ourselves and to others. This naturalness isn't a gift from heaven. It has to be acquired, in this life or in previous existences, by repeated practice. So the *sutta* says

that it is repeated practice that strengthens self-protection till it's strong enough to protect others too.

Practice on the practical, emotional, and intellectual levels won't be enough, however. The roots won't be firm and deep enough unless the practice includes meditation as well. By meditation, the practical, emotional, and intellectual motives of self-protection will become a mental property that cannot be easily lost again.

So the text uses the word *bhāvanā*, which means meditative development of the mind in its widest sense. Until we reach full Awakening, it's the highest form of protection in the world. A man who meditates, lives at peace with himself and with the world. No harm or violence will be done by him. The peace and purity he radiates will have conquering power and be a blessing to the world. He will be a positive factor in society, even if he lives in seclusion and silence. When there is no longer an appreciation of the social value of this sort of self-protection, it will be the first sign of spiritual death in a society.

Now let us consider the second phrase: "By protecting others, one protects oneself." The Buddha explained what this means: "through patience, through a non-violent and harmless life, through loving kindness, and pity."

A man who governs his relationships with others by these four principles will protect himself better than weapons and physical strength could. Patience or forbearance will help him to avoid many conflicts and quarrels. It will be easy to make many friends, those for whom he has shown patient understanding. Through not using force or coercion, he will rarely become an object of violence himself, since he doesn't

provoke it. If he should meet with violence, he will end it earlier and not extend it through vengeance. A person who is loving and kind to all beings, without enmity, will conquer the ill will of others and disarm those who are violent and brutal. A person who feels pity will be the friend and refuge of the whole world.

So moral self-protection is the basis. But it's only possible if it doesn't conflict with the protection of others. Otherwise, it will defile as well as endanger the individual. And protection of others mustn't conflict with the four principles of patience, non-violence, love, and pity. It mustn't interfere with the spiritual development of the individual.

Self-protection and the protection of others correspond to the two virtues of wisdom and pity. Right self-protection is the expression of wisdom, and right protection of others is the result of pity. Wisdom and pity are characteristics of *bodhi*, Awakening, and find their highest perfection in the Awakened One, the Buddha. The insistence on their harmonious development is a characteristic feature of the entire Dhamma. They are found in the four Divine Abidings, the *Brahma-vihāra*, where equanimity corresponds to wisdom and self-protection, whereas love, compassion, and sympathetic joy correspond to pity and protection of others.

These two principles of self-protection and protection of others are equally important in individual and social ethics and provide harmony between them both. They lead the individual on to the highest realization of the Dhamma and provide at the same time a firm foundation for society.

"I will protect myself," thus should we establish our mindfulness. That is how we should practise *Ānāpāna* and

Vipassanā. “I will protect others,” thus should we establish our mindfulness. In that sense we practise Ānāpāna and Vipassanā for the sake of our own liberation as well as for the welfare and happiness of many.

The Four Applications of Mindfulness

The four types of mindfulness are explained by Venerable Ledi Sayadaw in his *Manual of the Factors Leading to Enlightenment* (Bodhipakkhiya Dīpanī.)¹ He defines “application of mindfulness” (*satipaṭṭhāna*) as meaning mindfulness or heedfulness that is firmly established. There are four applications of mindfulness:

1. *Kāyānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*
2. *Vedanānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*
3. *Cittānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*
4. *Dhammānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*

In the Suttas that give a detailed treatment of this subject, it’s stated that, “The practice of the application of mindfulness is the direct way that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and sorrow, to the entering of the right path, and to the realization of Nibbāna.”² So let us look more closely at these four applications of mindfulness.

¹*The Manuals of Buddhism*, pp. 176-180; *The Wheel* Nos. 171/174, pp. 28-40.

²*Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*. The term “the direct way” for *ekāyana magga* is used in *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (Boston: Wisdom Books, 1995), p. 145. For an explanation, see p. 1188, note 135.

1. *Kāyānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna* means mindfulness that is firmly established on physical phenomena: “Mindfully let him inhale, mindfully let him exhale. If he inhales a long breath, let him be conscious of it; or if he exhales a long breath, let him be conscious of it, and so on.” You have been practising this for the last ten days.

2. *Vedanānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna* means mindfulness that is firmly established on sensations. This includes agreeable sensations or disagreeable sensations or indifferent sensations throughout the body—going from head to foot and from foot to head, moving part by part so that one is able to comprehend each part. This, too, you have been doing ever since you learned Vipassanā meditation.

3. *Cittānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna* means mindfulness that is firmly established on thought or mental processes, such as thoughts associated with the passions or dissociated from the passions. Sayagyi U Ba Khin pointed out how this is done in Vipassanā meditation:¹ “In Vipassanā meditation one contemplates not only upon the changing nature of *rūpa* or matter, but also upon the changing nature of *nāma*, thought-elements of attention projected towards the process of change of *rūpa* or matter. At times, the attention may be on the *anicca* of *rūpa* or matter only. At times the attention will be on the *anicca* of thought elements (*nāma*). When one is contemplating on *anicca* of *rūpa* or matter, one realizes also that the thought elements arising simultaneously with the awareness of the *anicca* of *rūpa* or matter are also in a state of transition or change. In that case, you are knowing the *anicca* of both *rūpa*

¹*Dhamma Texts*, pp. 93f.

and *nāma* together.” So you have also been practising this, and you should always remember to keep this in mind whenever you practise, either here or at your home.

4. *Dhammānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna* means mindfulness that is firmly established on phenomena such as the hindrances (*nivaraṇas*) and so forth. These have been explained in detail in earlier talks. With regard to observing mental states, you should know when one of the five hindrances is present and when it isn’t. You should know how they arise, how they are overcome, and how in the future they will no longer arise. You should know the nature of the five aggregates (*khandas*), how they arise, and how they are dissolved. You should know the twelve bases of all mental activity (*āyatana*): the eye and visual objects, the ear and audible objects, etc. You have been practising this all day long, also.

So we have seen the importance of right veneration, right protection, and right mindfulness and how these three work together. Let us resolve to protect ourselves through establishing our mindfulness and to protect others—again through establishing our mindfulness.

DAY NINE: EVENING DISCOURSE

The Message Taught by All the Buddhas

<i>Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ, Sacittapariyodapanam, Khantī paramam tapo titikkhā,</i>	<i>kusalassa upasampadā etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanaṃ nibbānaṃ paramam vadanti Buddhā.</i>
<i>Na hi pabbajito parūpaghātī</i>	<i>na samaṇo hoti paraṃ vihetṭhayanto,</i>
<i>Anūpavādo anūpaghāto Mattaññutā ca bhattasmiṃ, Adhicitte ca āyogo,</i>	<i>pātimokkhe ca saṃvaro, pantaṇ ca sayanāsanaṃ, etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanaṃ.</i>

To abstain from evil deeds.

To cultivate wholesome actions.

To purify the mind:

This is the Teaching of all the Buddhas.

Forbearing patience is the highest austerity.

“Nibbāna is supreme,” the Buddhas say.

He who harms another is not a true recluse, nor is he a true ascetic.

Not insulting others, not harming others, restraint according to the fundamental moral code, moderation in eating, living in seclusion, being intent on higher thoughts: this is the Teaching of all the Buddhas.

Dhammapada vv. 183-185

These verses teach us that we should do good and be good, that non-violence is the characteristic of the true ascetic, and that we should lead a pure and noble life.

These verses were spoken by the Buddha to Venerable Ānanda when he asked how previous Buddhas had observed the Uposatha Days—days corresponding to the four phases of the moon, when a special effort, such as observing additional precepts, was to be made.¹ The Buddha replied that all the Buddhas had recited these three verses in reference to the Uposatha Days.

We have seen that we are very fortunate to be able to put into practice these teachings of the Buddhas. First of all, we are fortunate to be born as humans. Out of all the thirty-one planes of existence, the human plane is the best for getting an appreciation of the inherent change in all conditioned things and of the suffering or unsatisfactory nature of all conditioned existence. If we had been born in the lower planes, we wouldn't have had the intelligence to understand, or we would suffer so much and so constantly, it would be impossible to have wholesome thoughts and do wholesome deeds. If we were born in the higher planes, we would either be so preoccupied by the pleasures there we wouldn't believe that suffering could exist, or we would live so long the fact of death would escape us. And in certain of the Brahmā planes, it would be impossible even to think.

The Perfections (*pāramīs*)

We have also seen that it takes an incredibly long time, an unbelievable number of lives, to develop the required perfections. These perfections can be developed on three levels. First, there is the ordinary level, which will lead to rebirth in

¹*Buddhist Legends*, III 60f.

happy planes. On the next level, they are developed more and can result in our encountering the teachings of a Buddha and attaining true happiness, Arahathship, or we might become one of the eighty leading disciples or one of the two chief disciples of a Buddha. The highest level in accomplishing the perfections leads to becoming Self-Awakened: either a non-teaching Buddha or one of the three types of teaching Buddhas.

As we said, there are ten of these perfections (*pāramīs*): generosity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), renunciation (*nekkhamma*), wisdom (*paññā*), effort or perseverance (*virīya*), patience or forbearance (*khanti*), truthfulness (*sacca*), determination (*addhiṭṭhāna*), loving kindness (*mettā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

As we can see, many of these have a direct relationship to what we have been doing here. We are practising morality by keeping the precepts, and in developing concentration and insight, we have had to use a lot of effort, patience, determination, and equanimity. When we share our merits, we practise loving kindness and generosity. All our wholesome actions in life will combine two or more of these perfections. The more we develop them, the better will be our meditation. The better we meditate, the better we will be able to fulfil these perfections.

If we have a mind that is concentrated, we will see more clearly the pain involved in greed, anger, and ignorance. When we are angry and shouting, there are disagreeable emotions accompanying our anger. Now we will see this more clearly. We will want to avoid such negative emotions. And through avoiding thoughts, deeds, and actions that result in pain, we will begin to put our effort into developing thoughts,

words, and actions that make us happier, and make others happier as well.

The Graduated Teaching

Even if we are primarily interested in worldly happiness, we will want to make an effort to develop these perfections. When the Buddha gave a discourse, it would be a graduated teaching. He would begin with the first of the *pāramīs*, generosity. This is because we can sum up wholesome actions in the domain of morality with the word generosity. And it's generosity that leads to rebirth in the higher planes. You have heard many of the stories referring to the examples of people such as Pukkusāti and Bāhiya Dārucīriya. These two couldn't obtain the eight requisites for themselves when they encountered the Buddha because they hadn't given *dāna* in their former lives—gifts such as the eight requisites of the bhikkhus, including robes, begging bowls, etc.—or because they had not helped fellow bhikkhus or had harmed a Pacceka Buddha; thus, they couldn't become bhikkhus. On the contrary, they were both killed by a mad cow, the same cow, it is said, killing both these Ariyas.¹ Thus, the Buddha started with establishing people in generosity. Without this base, it would be impossible to go further.

Next, he would teach his audience concerning morality, for the mind is more pliable when we are generous. We are well-disposed to seeing the wisdom in avoiding wrong actions and cultivating right action.

¹*Buddhist Legends*, II 120.

Then the Buddha would establish his listeners in the four Divine Abidings. Finally, if he saw that the potential was there, he would teach concentration and insight. This is why, in Buddhist countries, bhikkhus teach *dāna*, *sīla*, and *bhāvanā* to lay disciples. *Sīla* will lead to long life, and *dāna* will lead to material gains. You will notice how *dāna* could play a great role in the rounds of existence as in the examples of Anurudha, Visākhā, Anāthapiṇḍika, and many others.

The Discourse to the Villagers of Veḷudvāra¹

The discourse given by the Buddha to the villagers of Veḷudvāra illustrates how he suited his teachings to his listeners. This can be called “The Discourse on the Dhamma-way of Comparing Oneself with Another.” The villagers told the Buddha that they wanted to have many children, pleasant things such as perfumes, flowers, gold, and silver in this life, and after death they wanted to be reborn in the Deva worlds. How could they accomplish this?

The Buddha didn’t tell them they shouldn’t desire such transient pleasures. He knew that men are motivated by their own self-interest and that it serves no purpose to tell a man to be perfectly disinterested in his actions. It’s impossible before one becomes an Arahat. There will always be some ego involved in our actions before that.

So he taught them how to compare themselves with others. He told them to reflect in the following manner: “I want to live. I don’t want to die. I am fond of pleasure and dislike pain and suffering. Now if someone were to kill me, it

¹*The Kindred Sayings*, V 307-311.

would not be pleasing and delightful. If I kill someone else, it won't be pleasing and delightful to him. A condition that isn't pleasing to me isn't pleasing to others, so how can I impose a condition that isn't pleasing and delightful to me on others?"

In the same way, one should reflect on stealing, sexual misconduct, lies that can destroy our good fortune, dissension between friends, harsh words, foolish and useless talk. Seeing that they are all unpleasant, one will abstain from such actions, one will encourage others to abstain from them, and one will speak in praise of abstaining from such immoral actions.

Finally, one will develop unshaken faith and confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, realizing their qualities. We have already given these qualities and an explanation of the deeper levels of meaning in having confidence.

The Buddha ends his discourse to the people of Veḷudvāra by saying that through morality they will be able to attain concentration that will lead to becoming a Sotāpanna. And for one established in the first stage of Awakening, there is no more rebirth in the lower worlds.

This discourse, then, would be for those who are developing the perfections at the second level. The Buddha himself is one who has developed them to the highest degree. In the Pāli texts, there is one collection, called the Jātakas, that gives approximately 550 stories of the past lives of the Buddha, when he was the Boddisatta, and they help us appreciate all the preparations he had to make. They are only a small number of his many past lives, of course.

The Story of Vessantara

The story of his last life in the human world before becoming the Buddha is one of the best known of these Jātaka stories in Buddhist countries.¹ His name in that life was Vessantara, and he developed the *pāramī* of generosity to the highest degree during that lifetime. He was a prince, but his generosity was such that he gave away everything he could. He gave away the royal elephant that had the power to cause good rainfall in the country where it lived. Because of this, he was banished from his kingdom. His wife and children insisted on following him, and, as he couldn't refuse any request, he eventually gave away his children and wife too. Sakka, the king of the Devas, disguised himself as a man and asked for the wife, for he wished to aid the Bodhisatta in his perfecting of the *pāramīs* and made sure no harm came to his wife. The children were asked for by a brahman who wanted servants for his wife. But Vessantara's father, the king, paid the brahman to return the children to him.

Now we may not be working at that high level in developing the *pāramīs*, and so should not feel obliged to give away everything we own and everyone near and dear to us. But we can work for more spontaneous generosity, remembering that the Buddha advised laymen to wisely use their wealth, not only giving to people outside one's own family circle, but also being responsible husbands and wives, sons and daughters, fathers and mothers.

¹Jātaka No. 547.

The Buddha's Last Life

In his next to last life, the Bodhisatta is Setaketu Deva, on the Tusita celestial plane.¹ There, he awaits for all the right conditions to come together. When the right conditions that are conducive to his work prevail in the human realm, he considers who would be the right parents living in the right part of the world, and then he enters the mother's womb.

In Buddha Gotama's case, the parents were King Suddhodana and Queen Māyādevī of Kapilavatthu, a place near modern Nepal. At his birth, there were thirty-two marvels as the natural order of things in the cosmos was revolutionized in many respects. When this happened, Kāḷa-Devala, an ascetic at the court of King Suddhodana, was talking with celestial beings in the Tāvātimsa Deva world. When he was told that the king had a son and that there was rejoicing in the world, he went to the palace and asked for the baby to be brought to him. As the king was about to place the baby before his teacher, the baby rose into the air and rested his feet on the head of the ascetic. The ascetic understood at once that the baby was the future Buddha. He smiled at that thought. Then, with his supernormal powers, he foresaw that he wouldn't live to hear the teachings of the future Buddha and would be reborn in the immaterial plane of the Brahmās. On those planes, it's not possible to have any contact with the material planes, and so he cried.

Five days later, the baby was named Siddhattha, and the king's astrologers read the marks on his body and predicted that he would either become a Universal Monarch or an

¹See *Samantapasadika*, I 161.

Enlightened Being. One astrologer, however, held up one finger only, to indicate that there was only one possibility, that he would be a Buddha. And his name was Koṇḍañña.

The king wanted his son to be a Universal Monarch and rule over all the world, so he gave him a life of luxury. Three palaces were built to suit the three seasons of the year. Everything was done to make the prince sink into sensuality. The king ordered that nobody serving him or in association with him should ever speak a single word about such things as old age, sickness, and death. They were to act as if there were no unpleasant things in the world. Servants and attendants who showed the least sign of getting old, weak, or sickly were replaced. On the other hand, there was dancing, music, and enjoyable parties.

With time, however, the monotony of the sensual surroundings made them gradually lose their hold on the mind of Prince Siddhatta. The mental energies of virtue conserved in all his innumerable lives for the great goal of Buddhahood were automatically aroused. At times, when the world of sensuality lost control over his mind, his inner self worked its way up and raised his mind to a state of purity and tranquillity with the strength of *samādhi* such as had raised him when a baby above the head of the ascetic Kāḷa-Devala.

The Great Renunciation

The war of nerves began. He wanted to know what existed outside the walls of the palace. He decided to go to the Royal Park for his first visit outside, his first attempt to see nature as it is and not as man has made it. On the way to the park, in spite of all the precautions taken by the king to clear

the road of unpleasant sights, Siddhattha saw an old man. Next, he saw a sick person with a fatal illness. Then he encountered a corpse. Finally, he saw a bhikkhu. This set him to thinking. His mental attitude was changed. His mind was cleared of impurities and tuned up with the forces of his own virtues conserved in the plane of mental forces (*saṅkhāraloka*). By then, his mind was freed from hindrances, was tranquil, pure, and strong. He had seen the reality of old age, sickness, and death, and he had an indication, through the calm expression on the bhikkhu's face, that there might be an alternative to all this suffering.

His change of mental attitude happened on the night his wife had a son. He was immune, however, to anything that would tend to upset the equilibrium of his mind. The virtues of determination worked their way through to enable him to have strong resolve, and he made up his mind to seek the way of escape from birth, old age, suffering, and death.

This solemn determination was made at midnight. He had his attendant Channa get his horse Khandhika ready. He went to take one look at his son, whom he called Rāhula, meaning "impediment," as he realized that a son would be a temptation to him to remain as a prince. When he went into his wife's room, her arm hid the baby, but he went out again, thinking that if he touched her in order to see his son, she might wake up, speak to him and trouble his resolve. So he broke with all ties of family life and of the world and made the great renunciation. He rode out of the town to the river Anomā. He crossed the river never to return until his mission had been accomplished.

He lived as an ascetic with a begging bowl in his hand. And his first step was to place himself under the spiritual guidance of two renowned Brahman teachers, Ālāra and Uddaka. Ālāra laid stress on the belief in a soul (*atman*) and taught that the soul attains perfect release when freed from material limitations. This didn't satisfy the Bodhisatta. Next he went to Uddaka, who emphasized too much the effect of *kamma* and the transmigration of the soul. Neither could go beyond the conception of "soul" and the Bodhisatta felt there was something else to learn. He refused when each of his two teachers offered to place him on the same level as themselves and went to work out the way for emancipation on his own.

By this time, he had learned the eight absorptions of the fine-material and immaterial spheres (*samāpatti*) and was adept in the supernormal powers, including the ability to read events of many world cycles of the past and future. But they were still in the mundane field and didn't satisfy the Bodhisatta, whose ambition was to escape from this mundane world of birth, suffering, and death.

The Ascetic Practices

The Bodhisatta was joined by five ascetics, and one of them was Koṇḍañña, who had predicted he would attain Awakening. For six years, the Bodhisatta tried many ascetic practices in his search for the end to suffering. The five ascetics served him well during all this time. He fasted and subjected himself to various forms of rigorous austerities and discipline till he was reduced almost to a skeleton. In fact, one day he fell down in a faint through exhaustion. When he regained consciousness he realized that extreme austerity

wasn't the path. He changed his method and followed a middle course and found that the way to his Awakening was clearer. The five ascetics, who just assumed that the more severe the practice the better, decided that he had given up working seriously. Disappointed, they left him.

The Awakening

On the evening of Vesākha (the full-moon of Kason in the Myanmar calendar) over 2,500 years ago, the Bodhisatta Siddhattha sat cross-legged beneath a Bodhi tree on the bank of the river Nerañjarā in the forest of Uruvela, near present-day Bodh Gaya. He made the strongest of determinations—that he wouldn't rise from that posture on any account until he gained the truth and Awakening, Buddhahood, even if the attempt meant the loss of his life.

As he called up all his strength of mind to secure that one-pointedness of mind that is so essential for the discovery of truth, he found that on this occasion the balancing of the mind wasn't as easy as before. There was something more than the mental forces of the lower planes in combination with those of the higher planes all around him; there were also interferences strong enough to upset the balance of his mind. There was unusual resistance coming from the impenetrable masses of forces against the radiation of light normally secured by him. Perhaps because it was a final bid for Buddhahood, so Māra, the supreme controller of evil forces, was behind the scene. And it's interesting to note here that Māra is on the plane of the Devas who enjoy others' creations—he has the mistaken belief that all conditioned things belong to him. The Bodhisatta, however, worked his way through, slowly but surely, backed

up by the mental forces of virtues which must inevitably come back to him at the right moment. He made a vow and called on all the Brahmās and Devas who had witnessed the fulfilment of his ten great perfections to join hands with him in the struggle for supremacy. You may have noticed that the statues of the Buddha from Myanmar show the Buddha touching the ground with one hand. This is the representation of his calling the earth as a witness to all his past work on the perfections.

This done, the association with the transcendently pure mental forces of the Brahmās and Devas had a good effect. The thick masses of forces, which seemed impenetrable for a time, broke away, and with steady improvement in the control over the mind, they were wiped out once and for all. All the hindrances were overcome, and he was then able to raise his power of concentration and put his mind in a state of complete purity, tranquillity, and equanimity. Gradually, the consciousness of true insight possessed him. The solution to the vital problems that confronted him made its appearance in his consciousness as an inspiration.

Through introspective meditation on the realities of nature in his own self, it came vividly to him that there is no substantiality in the human body as seems to be the case. It is nothing but the sum total of innumerable millions of *kalāpas*—the smallest units of existence, which we have already explained. On further investigation, he realized that these *kalāpas* are also matter in constant change or flux. The same is true of the mind, which is a representation of the mental forces going out, the creative forces, and the mental forces coming in—the created forces that come into the system of an individual continually throughout the countless rounds of existence.

The Buddha then proclaimed that the eye of wisdom had arisen in him when he overcame the wrong view of the substantiality of his own self; for he saw through the lens of concentration (*samādhi*) the *kalāpas* to which he then applied the law of impermanence (*anicca*) and reduced them to nonentity or behaviour. He did away with what we call in Buddhism *paññātti*, meaning concept, idea, designation. When he did away with this conceptualizing, this designating, he came to the state of truth (*paramattha*), the truth of the nature of forces—in other words, Ultimate Reality.

Realizing the perpetual change of mind and matter in himself (*anicca*), he realized as a sequel, the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha*). It was then that egocentricity broke down in him, leaving the void, and he got over to a stage beyond suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*) where no more trace of *attā* or attachment to self were left behind. Mind and matter were empty phenomena to him, rolling on for all time, coming within the range of the law of cause and effect and the law of Dependent Origination. The Truth was realized. The inherent qualities of Embryo Buddha then developed, and complete Awakening came to him by the dawn of the day of Vesākha.

Truly Siddhattha attained Perfect Awakening, *sammā-sambodhi*, and became the Buddha, the Awakened One, the Enlightened One, the All-Knowing One. He was awake in a way compared to which all others were asleep and dreaming. He was enlightened in a way compared with which all other men were stumbling and groping in the dark. He knew with the knowledge compared with which all that other men knew was but a kind of ignorance.

We have taken this account of the life of the Buddha from Sayagyi U Ba Khin's booklet *What Buddhism Is*.¹ He preceded his account with a description of the Buddhist concept of the universe, to help explain the significance of Buddhahood and the difficulties in attaining Awakening. Since we have mentioned the thirty-one planes of existence frequently in these talks, let us look at them a little more closely.

The Thirty-One Planes of Existence

Sayagyi explained that there are three universes which are interwoven and interpenetrating:² The Universe of Space (*okāsa-loka*), the Universe of Mental Forces (*sāṅkhāra-loka*), and the Universe of Sentient Beings (*satta-loka*). The universe of space accommodates the mundane world. The universe of sentient beings is the domain of the visible or invisible beings who are the products of mental forces. These mental forces are in turn creative or created in the universe of mental forces. Mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*) are under the influence of the law of cause and effect. These three universes cannot be separated one from the other.

Within this three-in-one universe there are millions and millions of world systems (*cakkavāḷas*). It would be impossible to count them. We live in only one of these world-systems. The ten-thousand world-systems closest to us are called the field of origin (*jāti-khetta*), for they are the field of origin of a Buddha. When the Buddha gave the discourse

¹See *Dhamma Texts*, pp 5-12.

²See *Dhamma Texts*, pp. 3-5, and *The Path of Purification*, Chapter VII, ¶¶ 37-45.

known as the Great Occasion (Mahā-Samaya) in the forest near the town of Kapilavatthu, Brahmās and Devas of all those ten-thousand world-systems were present in addition to the Brahmās and Devas of our own world-system.

The Buddha is so highly developed he can send his thought waves, charged with boundless love and compassion, to the sentient beings of a billion such world-systems, as they are within the field of influence (*āṇā-khetta*). The remaining countless world-systems which are beyond the reach of the Buddha's effective thought waves are called infinite space (*visaya-khetta*).

The material insignificance of our world in the universe of space is simply terrifying. The human world, as a whole, is just a speck in space.

Now let us look at the thirty-one planes of existence in our world-system. They are the same, of course, in all other world-systems. They can be divided into three categories: the highest types are the immaterial planes of the Brahmās (*arūpa-loka*), followed by the fine material planes of the Brahmās (*rūpa-loka*), and below those come the sensuous planes including the Deva planes, mankind, and lower beings (*kāma-loka*). The immaterial planes of the Brahmās are four in number, and beings in these planes cannot interact with lower planes. That is why the hermit teacher was upset when he realized he was destined for these planes because he knew this meant he would miss the Buddha's Teachings. On those planes, he would be in the highest of the states possible in terms of concentration, but he would miss the opportunity to go beyond the cycle of birth and death.

There are sixteen planes in the fine-material planes of the Brahmās. This is where the Brahmā is reborn who thinks himself eternal—because he lives so long—and the creator—because when he realizes he would like to have other beings on the same plane with him, there may chance to be other Brahmās who take rebirth at that moment.

These Brahmā planes are reached through the absorption states. These non-sensual planes are in space, as it were, and there is no taint of sensuality, no taint of impurity. It is radiance, so to say. There, one enjoys a perfect, transcendental peace. So when we try to develop our minds to a perfect state of purity, we try to transport our minds to be in tune with the nature of the first absorption state. We try at least to get out of the lower magnetic field of the subhuman planes and the upper magnetic field of the sensual planes.

Below the Brahmā planes, all the beings are in sensual planes. The six Deva planes have celestial beings who enjoy sensuality of the greatest height. One goes to these planes through leading moral lives and doing good deeds. While enjoying life there, the balance of credits of good deeds is consumed, and when the span of life is over, rebirth can occur on any plane.

We live in the human plane, in between the Deva planes and the lower worlds. There are four lower worlds: a demon world of earth spirits (*asura*), the ghost world (*peta*), the animal world (*tiricchāna*), and the hells (*niraya*).

All the thirty-one planes of existence are pure or impure, cool or hot, luminous or dark, light or heavy, pleasant or wretched, depending on the character of the mental forces generated by the mind, by the series of volitional thoughts,

words, and deeds. The mental forces generated by us settle down in these planes depending on whether they are good or bad—and it's as if a place were being reserved for us in a future life. If we make best use of the place we have now, if we work as we should, have the necessary background, and can cut through this three-in-one universe and reach Nibbāna—then no mental force, good or bad, will be able to bind us to the cycle of birth and death.

DAY TEN: MORNING DISCOURSE

Overcoming Opposition

*Kumbhūpamaṃ kāyaṃ imaṃ viditvā,
nagarūpamaṃ cittaṃ idaṃ ṭhapetvā
Yodhetha Māraṃ paññāvudhena,
jitañ ca rakkhe anivesano siyā.*

Realizing that this body is fragile like an earthen pot and
establishing this mind firm like a fortress,
One should fight Māra with the weapon of knowledge,
one should keep up the conquest and be free from
attachment.

Dhammapada v. 40

The Practice of Loving Kindness

This verse was given by the Buddha in connection with
five hundred bhikkhus who went to meditate in the forest
when the Buddha was residing in Sāvatti.¹

The Buddha gave the five hundred bhikkhus a meditation
subject so that they could work for Arahathship, and the
bhikkhus went a hundred leagues to a large village. The
people in the village fed them and then asked, “Reverend sirs,
where are you going?”

The bhikkhus replied, “To some pleasant place.” Then the
villagers said, “Reverend sirs, reside here during these three

¹See *Buddhist Legends*, II 17-19, and *The Illustrator of Ultimate Meaning*, pp. 265-294.

months. Under your direction we will abide steadfast in the Refuges and will keep the precepts.” When the bhikkhus consented, the villagers pointed out a forest nearby and told them, “Take up your residence there.”

Virtuous earth Devas lived in that forest, and seeing the bhikkhus come, they thought, “A company of bhikkhus has come to our forest. If they live here, it will be improper for us to continue to take our son and wife, climb in the trees and live there.” So they came down from the trees and sat on the ground, thinking, “The bhikkhus will only stay the night. Tomorrow morning they will surely leave.” But the next day, the bhikkhus went on their alms round in the village and returned to the forest. So the earth Devas thought, “Someone must have invited the company of bhikkhus for tomorrow. That is why they have returned. They won’t go away today, but tomorrow they will surely leave.” And it went on like that for two weeks.

Finally, the earth Devas concluded, “These bhikkhus intend to stay here for three months. And we won’t be able to go up in the trees with our families. It will be very tiresome to remain here on the ground. How can we drive these bhikkhus away?”

After that, the bhikkhus saw bodiless heads and headless trunks and heard the voices of demons in their sleeping quarters and in their daytime quarters. These visions were sent by the earth Devas. In addition, the bhikkhus were afflicted with sneezing and coughing and other ailments. Because of all this, the bhikkhus decided to go to the Buddha. So they left the forest, made their way back to Sāvatti, paid their respects to the Buddha, and sat down to one side.

The Buddha asked them if they were able to live where they had gone. "Venerable sir," they answered, "while we were living there, fearful objects presented themselves to our sight. It was so unpleasant for us that we decided we must leave. So we abandoned that place and have returned to you." Then the Buddha said to them, "Bhikkhus, you ought to return to that place." But they told him, "Venerable sir, we cannot do that."

"Bhikkhus," the Buddha said, "when you went there the first time, you went without a weapon. Now you must take a weapon with you when you go." And the bhikkhus asked, "What kind of weapon, venerable sir?"

"I will give you a weapon," the Buddha replied, "and the weapon which I give you, you are to take with you when you go." And the Buddha taught them the Discourse on Loving Kindness.¹

This is what is to be done by one who is skilful in
respect of the good, having attained the peaceful state.
He should be capable, straight, and very upright, easy
to speak to, gentle and not proud,

contented and easy to support, having few duties and of
a frugal way of life, with his sense-faculties calmed,
zealous, not impudent, [and] not greedy [when going
on alms rounds] among families.

And he should not do any mean thing, on account of
which other wise men would criticize him. Let all

¹This translation is based on K.R. Norman's in *The Group of Discourses*, p. 24.

creatures indeed be happy [and] secure; let them be happy-minded.

Whatever living creatures there are, moving or still,
without exception, whichever are long or large, or
middle-sized or short, small or great,
whichever are seen or unseen, whichever live far or
near, whether they already exist or are going to be, let
all creatures be happy minded.

One man should not humiliate another; one should not
despise anyone anywhere. One should not wish
another misery because of anger or from the notion of
repugnance.

Just as a mother would protect with her life her own
son, her only son, so one should cultivate an
unbounded mind towards all beings,
and loving kindness towards all the world. One should
cultivate an unbounded mind, above and below and
across, without obstruction, without enmity, without
rivalry.

Standing or going or seated or lying down, as long as
one is free from drowsiness, one should practise this
mindfulness. This, they say, is the holy state here.

Not subscribing to wrong views, virtuous, endowed
with insight, having overcome greed for sensual pleasures,
a creature assuredly does not come to lie again
in a womb.

After giving this discourse, the Buddha said to the bhikkhus, “Recite this *sutta* in the forest, around your lodgings, and then you may go back to your lodgings.” And he sent them back.

They paid their respects to the Buddha and went back to the forest. Now that they were armed with the *Mettā Sutta*, the attitude of the earth Devas was very different. After they recited it, the earth Devas felt friendly feelings towards the bhikkhus. They went out to meet them, asked to take their robes and bowls, offered to rub their hands and feet, posted strong guards on all sides, and sat down together with the bhikkhus. Not a demon’s voice was heard. The minds of the bhikkhus became tranquil, and they were able to strive night and day through *Vipassanā* meditation. They were using a technique especially adapted for bhikkhus which involves reflecting on the decay and death inherent in their bodies. The Buddha saw that they had begun to develop insight, so he sent forth a luminous image of himself and appeared as if he were seated in front of them, radiating rays of light of six colours. And he pronounced the verse we quoted at the beginning:

Realizing that this body is fragile like an earthen pot and
establishing this mind firm like a fortress,
One should fight Māra with the weapon of knowledge,
one should keep up the conquest and be free from
attachment.

Dhammapada v. 40

This story shows us that loving kindness was first taught not just for the well-being of others, but also as a sort of self-protection. And before we can send thoughts of loving kindness, we must prepare ourselves through moral living and

through being easily contented. You will note that at the very beginning, the motivation behind giving loving kindness for a person who hasn't attained full Awakening is the attaining of Nibbāna. It is only after one is fully Awakened that *mettā* can be sent devoid of any self-interest.

The Buddha, who was Self-Awakened, was able to send loving kindness to all, better than anyone else. And throughout the stories that come down to us of his life, we can see how his every thought, word, and deed was full of loving kindness, patience, compassion, and equanimity. Let us look at two examples.

The Story of the Weaver's Daughter

*Andhabhūto ayam loko tanuk' ettha vipassati.
Sakuṇo jālamutto va appo saggāya gacchati.*

This world is blind. Few are they who see clearly. As few as the birds that escape from a net are they who go to a blissful state.

Dhammapada v. 174

This verse was spoken by the Buddha when he was in residence at the Aggāḷava Shrine with reference to a certain weaver's daughter.¹ One day, the Buddha was invited by the residents of Āḷavī for a meal. When he returned thanks at the end of the meal, he instructed them, saying:

Practise meditation on death. Say to yourselves, "My life is uncertain. My death is certain. I shall surely die. Death will be the termination of my life. Life is unstable. Death is

¹See *Buddhist Legends*, III 14-18.

sure.” For those who haven’t practised meditation on death will tremble and fear when their last hour comes, and they will die screaming with terror, like a man who sees a snake and has no stick to protect himself; he will be stricken with fear. But those who practise meditation on death will have no fear when they die. They will be like a steadfast man who sees a snake from afar, takes up his stick, and tosses the snake aside. So practise meditation on death.

All the people of Āḷavī except one remained absorbed in their worldly affairs just as before. Only one weaver’s daughter, sixteen years old, said to herself, “The speech of the Buddhas is marvellous indeed. I should practise meditation on death.” And for three years, day and night, she practised this meditation. The Buddha left Āḷavī and went to reside in the Jetavana in Sāvatthi.

One day, when the Buddha surveyed the world at early dawn, he saw that this girl had entered the Net of his Knowledge. He saw that she had meditated for three years on death and that she would be able to answer four questions that he would ask her. He would congratulate her on her answers and then pronounce the verse beginning “Blind is this world ...”; and at the conclusion of the verse, the girl would be established in the first stage of Awakening. And many others would profit by his discourse.

So the Buddha went again to the Aggāḷava Monastery together with five hundred bhikkhus, a distance of thirty leagues. And the people of Āḷavī invited him again. When the girl heard that the Buddha had come, her heart was filled with joy. “They say that he has come, he who is my father, my master, my teacher, whose face is like the full moon, the

mighty Buddha Gotama.” Then she thought to herself, “Now, for the first time in three years, I will see the Teacher and hear him teach the Dhamma which is sublime, full of sweetness.”

But her father, on his way to his workshop, said to her, “Daughter, a garment for a customer is on the loom and is incomplete. I must finish it today. Replenish the shuttle and bring it to me.” The girl hesitated, but then she thought, “If I don’t bring my father the shuttle, he will strike me and beat me. So I will do as he says and wait until afterwards to hear the Dhamma.”

The people of Ālavī provided the Teacher and the Order of Bhikkhus with food, and when the meal was over, they took his bowl and stood to one side, waiting for him to return thanks.

But the Buddha said to them, “I came here, a journey of thirty leagues, for the sake of a certain weaver’s daughter. I shall wait for her to come, and when she finds an opportunity to be present, I will return thanks.”

When the girl had replenished the shuttle, she put it in her basket and headed for her father’s workshop. On the way, she stopped on the outer circle of the people and gazed at the Teacher. He lifted up his head and looked at her. “He wants me to come,” she thought and drew near.

The Buddha looked at her because he knew that if he didn’t, she wouldn’t approach him. There was no way for her to escape death that day, but if she heard him teach, she would be established as a Sotāpanna and be reborn in the Tusita celestial plane.

At the mere hint of his look, the girl approached the Buddha, paid her respects to him, and stood respectfully to one side. Then the Buddha addressed her with four questions:

“Maiden, where do you come from?” he asked.

“Venerable sir, I don’t know,” she replied.

“Where are you going?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” she replied.

“You don’t know?” he asked.

“I know, venerable sir,” she answered.

“You know?” he asked.

“I don’t know, venerable sir,” she answered.

The people were offended and said, “Just look, this weaver’s daughter says whatever she pleases to the Awakened One. When he asked, ‘Where do you come from?’ she should have answered, ‘From the weaver’s house.’ When he asked, ‘Where are you going?’ she should have said, ‘To the weaver’s workshop.’ ”

Then the Buddha asked her, “Maiden, when I asked you, ‘Where do you come from?’ why did you say, ‘I don’t know?’” And the girl said, “Venerable sir, you know I come from my father’s house. So when you asked me where I came from, I knew you meant where did I come from when I was born here. I don’t know the answer to that.”

The Buddha congratulated her on understanding correctly his question and asked her, “When I asked you where you were going, why did you answer that you didn’t know?” And the girl said, “Venerable sir, you know I was going to the weaver’s workshop with the shuttle-basket in my hand. So

when you asked me where I was going, I knew very well that the meaning was, where will I go from here when I am reborn. But I don't know where I'll be reborn after this existence."

The Buddha congratulated her again and asked, "When I asked you, 'Do you know?' why did you answer, 'I know'?" And she answered, "Venerable sir, this much I know, I shall surely die. So I said so."

The Buddha congratulated her a third time. Then he asked her, "When I asked you 'You know?' why did you say, 'I don't know'?" And she said, "I only know that I shall die, venerable sir. When I shall die, whether it will be at night, in the daytime, in the morning, or any other time, that I don't know. So I said so." And again the Teacher congratulated her for understanding the question correctly.

Then the Buddha spoke to the people, saying, "So many of you failed to understand her answers. You were offended. For those who don't have the Eye of Understanding are blind. Only those who possess the Eye of Understanding can see." And he pronounced the verse that we gave at the beginning of the story:

This world is blind. Few are they who see clearly. As
few as the birds that escape from a net are they who
go to a blissful state.

Dhammapada v. 174

At the end of the verse, the girl was established in the first fruition state of Awakening; she became a Sotāpanna.

Then she took her shuttle-basket and went to her father. He was asleep, sitting at his loom. She didn't notice he was

asleep and gave him the basket. It hit the tip of the loom and fell with a clatter. Her father woke up, and taking hold of the loom, gave it a pull. The end of the loom accidentally swung around and struck the girl in the chest. She died immediately and was reborn in the plane of the Tusita Devas. When the father realized what had happened he was grief-stricken. He went to the Buddha and told him about the death of his daughter. "Venerable sir," he requested, "make an end to my grief."

"Don't grieve," the Buddha told him. "In the round of existences without a knowable beginning, you have shed more tears in grieving over the death of your daughter than there is water in the four oceans." The man's grief was ended, and he asked to be admitted to the Order of Bhikkhus. And in no long time he attained Arahatsip.

The Story of The Hungry Farmer

Jighacchā paramā rogā saṅkhāraparamā dukkhā
Etaṃ natvā yathābhūtaṃ nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ.

Hunger is the worst disease. Conditioned phenomena cause the worst suffering.

Knowing this as it really is, one attains Nibbāna, the supreme happiness.

Dhammapada v. 203

This verse was spoken by the Buddha when he was in residence in Āḷavī with reference to a certain lay disciple, a poor farmer.¹

¹See *Buddhist Legends*, III 74-76.

One day, seated in the Perfumed Chamber at Jetavana, the Buddha surveyed the world at dawn, and he saw a poor farmer in Ālavī, and he realized that the farmer possessed the requisites for becoming a Sotāpanna. So the Buddha went there with a group of five hundred bhikkhus, and the people of Ālavī invited them for a meal. When the poor man heard that the Buddha had come, he decided to go to hear the Buddha teach. But that same day, an ox of his strayed off. He thought to himself, “Now what shall I do? Shall I look for the ox or go to hear the Dhamma?” And he decided, “I’ll first look for the ox and then go to hear the Dhamma.” And he set out to find his ox.

The people of Ālavī prepared seats for the Buddha and the five hundred bhikkhus and served the meal. After the meal they took the Teacher’s bowl so that he could give thanks. But he said, “The man I came thirty leagues to teach has gone into the forest to look for what he lost. When he returns, I will give the discourse.”

Before nightfall, the man found his ox and drove it back to the herd. And then he thought, “Even if I can do nothing else, at least I can pay respects to the Teacher.” And although he was very hungry, he decided not to return home but to go straight to the Buddha. When he arrived, he paid respects and sat down to one side. Then the Buddha asked the man responsible for serving the meal, “Is there any food remaining from what was served to the Order of Bhikkhus?”

“The food hasn’t been touched, venerable sir,” was the answer.

“Well then, serve this poor man some food,” the Buddha instructed.

So the steward served the poor farmer with food, and as soon as his physical suffering had been relieved, his mind became tranquil. Then the Buddha preached the Dhamma, giving a graduated discourse, expounding one after the other the Four Noble Truths. At the conclusion of the discourse, the man was established in the fruition state of a Sotāpanna. Then the Buddha gave the words of thanks and rose from his seat and left.

Now we are told that this is the only time that the Buddha ever inquired concerning the food. And as he was returning with the bhikkhus, some bhikkhus were highly indignant. “Just consider,” they said. “Look what the Teacher did! Nothing like that has ever happened before. Seeing a poor man, the Teacher asked about the supply of food and gave orders for food to be given to him.”

The Buddha stopped, turned around, and asked the bhikkhus what they were talking about. When they explained, he said to them, “Bhikkhus, when I came here, undertaking a long and difficult journey of thirty leagues, my sole purpose was to establish this man as a Sotāpanna. Early in the morning, already hungry, that man went to the forest and spent the day looking for his lost ox. Therefore, I thought to myself, ‘If I teach this man while he is hungry, he won’t be able to understand.’ That is why I did what I did. Bhikkhus, there is no affliction like the affliction of hunger.” And the Buddha gave the verse we quoted at the beginning of the story:

Hunger is the worst disease. Conditioned phenomena cause the worst suffering.

Knowing this as it really is, one attains Nibbāna, the supreme happiness.

Developing the Divine Abidings¹

From these stories, we can appreciate the need for us to develop loving kindness, and we can see what a perfect example the Buddha gave. He didn't force his Teachings on others, but when he could see that a person was ready, he would go to great extremes to help that person. We can also see, in the case of the poor farmer, that there are more important things than a blind adherence to rules or traditions. As you can guess from the reaction of the bhikkhus, the fact that the Buddha inquired about food and asked for someone to be served was very unusual for someone who wasn't a layman. The bhikkhus had renounced the world and never begged for food. Buddhist bhikkhus to this day go on alms rounds, giving laypeople the opportunity to serve them food, but never asking for food, or hinting at what they would like. The Buddha knew, of course, that it would be useless to tell the hungry man how virtuous it is to keep eight precepts and not eat after noon. After all his exertion, the farmer needed food. Otherwise, his mind would be too agitated for him to listen to and understand the Buddha's discourse.

Now, how can we work to develop such qualities as loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity? These are known as the Divine Abidings (*Brahma-vihāra*). They are also called the Four Boundless States or Four Illimitables (*appamaññā*). The Buddha taught the bhikkhus to do the following:

¹This discussion is mainly based on Ashin Buddhaghosa's description in *The Path of Purification*, Chapter IX.

There, bhikkhus, the bhikkhu with a mind full of loving kindness pervades first one direction, then a second, then a third, then the fourth direction. Just as above, so too below and all around. And everywhere, he identifies himself with all. He pervades the whole world with his mind full of loving kindness, with his mind wide, developed, unbounded, free from hate and ill will.¹ One develops the mind similarly with compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

In *The Path of Purification*,² Ashin Buddhaghosa says that one should go to a quiet place where one can sit in a comfortable position. Then one should consider the dangers in hate first and the benefits offered by forbearance. The purpose of this is to displace hate by forbearance. For we cannot avoid dangers if we haven't seen them, nor can we cultivate benefits we don't know yet.

In the first stages there are certain types of individuals towards whom we shouldn't develop loving kindness. It's tiring to try to regard a person we dislike as if they were dear to us. It's difficult to remain neutral with regards to those who are dear to us. And if the slightest mischance happens to a friend, we feel like weeping. If we think of an enemy, anger arises. It's tiring to put a person towards whom one is neutral in the position of a person who is dear. If we direct our thoughts to members of the opposite sex, lust may arise. And if we try to develop loving kindness towards a person who is dead, we won't be able to reach either absorption or access

¹*The Kindred Sayings*, IV 227; *The Gradual Sayings*, II 132, V 193.

²Chapter IX, ¶¶ 1ff.

concentration. That is to say, we won't make any headway at all.

Therefore, in the beginning, we should develop loving kindness towards ourselves, repeatedly saying: "May I keep myself free from enmity and trouble and live happily."

As one cultivates the thought, "May I be happy," with oneself as the example, then one can begin to be interested in the welfare and happiness of others. We can begin to feel to some extent that their happiness is like our own. We reflect, "Just as I want to live happily and not to die, so too do others wish to live happily and not to die." Once we have practised pervading ourselves with loving kindness, then we can choose someone who is liked, admired, and very respected. We can begin with the thought, "May he be happy," remembering his virtues.

When this thought towards a respected person is familiar, then we can practise loving kindness towards someone who is dear to us. Next we can direct our thoughts towards a neutral person as dear. Lastly, we can direct our thoughts to a foe, putting him in the stead of a person towards whom we are neutral.

Care should be taken when dealing with an enemy, for anger can arise, and all means must be tried in order to get rid of it. When this is successful, we will be able to regard a foe without resentment and with loving kindness in the very same way we regard the admired person, the dearly loved one, and the neutral person.

At this stage, loving kindness can be effectively maintained towards all beings or to certain groups at a time: in one

direction at a time towards all beings, or to certain groups in succession.

We can expect eleven blessings when we are able to maintain loving kindness, make much of it, use it as a vehicle, and use it as a foundation; when we are established in it and keep it consolidated and properly managed. In the *Mettā Sutta*, these blessings are expressed this way:¹

A man sleeps in peace and comfort, he wakes in peace and comfort, he dreams no evil dreams, he is dear to human beings, he is dear to non-human beings, the Devas guard him, no fire or poison or weapon harms him, his mind can be quickly concentrated, the expression of his face is serene, he dies without falling into confusion, and even if he fails to penetrate any further, he will pass on to the world of High Divinity, to the *Brahmā World*.

In order to develop compassion (*karuṇā*), we should begin by reviewing the danger of not having compassion and the advantage of possessing it. As with loving kindness, we shouldn't begin by directing compassion towards a person towards whom we feel neutral, antipathetic or hostile, towards a member of the opposite sex or towards someone who is dead.

As it is said in the *Vibhaṅga*,² "How does one dwell pervading one direction with his heart endued with compassion? Just as one would feel compassion on seeing an unlucky,

¹*The Gradual Sayings*, V 219.

²*The Book of Analysis*, p. 359.

unfortunate person, so one pervades all beings with compassion.”

Right from the start, the meditation of compassion should be developed with a wretched person as the object. We think of someone who is unlucky, unfortunate, in every way a fit object for compassion, unsightly, reduced to utter misery. We should think like this: “This person has indeed been reduced to misery. If only he could be freed from this suffering.”

If we don’t encounter a wretched person, then we can arouse compassion for an evil doer. Ashin Buddhaghosa expressed it like this:¹

Suppose a criminal is under orders of execution by the ruler. The executioners bind him and lead him off to the place of execution, flogging him a hundred times. Then the passersby give him things to eat and he goes along eating and enjoying these things, but no one will think that he is really happy. Everyone will feel compassion for him, thinking: “This wretched person is going to die soon. Every step leads him nearer to the presence of death.”

In this way we should arouse compassion for an evil doer.

Next, we should arouse compassion for a person who is dear to us, then towards a neutral person, and finally towards a hostile person. Care should be taken with regard to an enemy, and if resentment arises, one must try by all means to get rid of it in the same way used with loving kindness.

¹*The Path of Purification*, Chapter IX, ¶ 79.

The Buddha himself set us the example, through attending personally to the sick. He told his disciples, "He who ministers to the sick ministers unto me."

The Buddha showed great compassion towards persons such as the courtesan Ambapālī and towards the murderer Angulimāla. Both became his disciples and underwent a complete reformation in character.

In order to develop sympathetic joy, appreciative joy (*muditā*), we should start with a very dear companion, one who in the commentaries is called a "boon companion." This will be someone who is always glad, who laughs first and speaks afterwards. The Vibhaṅga says it like this:¹ "How does a meditator dwell pervading one direction with his heart endued with sympathetic joy? Just as one may have sympathetic joy on seeing a lovely, pleasant person, so one pervades all beings with sympathetic joy."

Even if someone who is dear to us is unlucky and unfortunate at the present moment, sympathetic joy can still be aroused by remembering his happiness in the past. We should think to ourselves, "In the past he possessed great wealth and a great following and he was always happy." And sympathetic joy can be aroused by thinking into the future, like this, "In the future this person who is dear to me will again enjoy similar success with gold and silver, going about in gold palanquins with a great following, and so on."

Then we can direct sympathetic joy towards a neutral person and finally towards an enemy. But if we arouse resentment when dealing with an enemy, we should make it

¹*The Book of Analysis*, p. 360.

subside just as we did with loving kindness. *Muditā* isn't mere gladness, but sympathetic joy that tends to destroy jealousy, its direct enemy. It embraces all prosperous persons and is the congratulatory attitude of a person, and the tendency is to eliminate any dislike towards successful persons.

The development of equanimity (*upekkhā*) is the most difficult and the most essential of the four Divine Abidings. In his *Buddhist Dictionary*, Nyanatiloka says, "Equanimity is an ethical quality belonging to the group of fifty mental phenomena (*saṅkhāra-kkhandhā*) and shouldn't be confused with 'indifferent feeling' [that is to say, the 'neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant sensations']." At times, the same word (*upekkhā*) is used for both these meanings. Here, we are only concerned with equanimity as a pure state of consciousness (*sobhaṇa*). It is in this sense that it is one of the four Divine Abidings and one of the Factors of Enlightenment. It means "impartially" or "rightly." One should discern rightly, viewing justly, or look on impartially—without attachment or aversion, without favour or disfavour.

Venerable Nārada Thera said, "Equanimity is essential, especially for laymen who have to live in an ill-balanced world amidst fluctuating circumstances. Slightings and insults are the common lot of mankind. The world is so constituted that the good and the virtuous are very often subject to unjust criticism and attack. It is heroic to maintain a balanced mind in such circumstances.

“Loss and gain, fame and infamy, praise and blame, pain and happiness are eight worldly conditions that affect all humanity.”¹

In order to develop equanimity, we should first turn our thoughts towards a person to whom we are normally neutral. Then, towards a person dear to us, next, a hostile person, and then the rest. As it is stated in the *Vibhaṅga*,² “How does a meditator dwell pervading one direction with his mind endued with equanimity? Just as he would feel equanimity on seeing a person who is neither pleasant nor unpleasant, in the same way he pervades all beings with equanimity.”

By thinking of a neutral person, we can break down the barriers which exist in the case of a person dear to us, an enemy, or in our own case. How are the barriers broken down? Suppose a man is with a person dear to him, a person towards whom he feels neutral, and a hostile person. Now suppose robbers seize them and say he has to choose one person who will have his throat cut as the robbers want to make an offering with the blood. If the man points to one of the other three, he hasn't broken down the barriers. If he offers himself, he still hasn't broken down the barriers. Why? Because in that case, he seeks the harm of himself and seeks the welfare of others. It is only when he doesn't see a single person among the four to give to the robbers and directs his mind impartially towards himself and the others that he has broken down the barriers.

¹*The Buddha and His Teachings*, (Buddhist Publication Society, 1980), p. 637.

²*The Book of Analysis*, p. 362.

These are the Four Divine Abidings. We will find them helpful in our everyday life. And the more we develop them, the better we will be able to work on our meditation. Developing equanimity will especially be useful to us during Vipassanā. But these four states aren't our ultimate goal. If we limit ourselves to them, the most we can expect is to be reborn in the Brahmā planes where we will have a very happy existence—but not forever. Sooner or later, that life will end, and there's no way of knowing how much suffering may wait for us in future lives. Our goal is Nibbāna: the end of all suffering.

The development of the Four Divine Abidings (*Brahma-vihāra bhāvanā*) will help us if we practise each of the virtues over and over again so that we accomplish mental impartiality towards ourselves, those dear to us, those towards whom we are neutral, and towards our enemies. With reference to loving kindness, Ashin Buddhaghosa points out that “the sign and access are obtained . . . simultaneously with the breaking down of the barriers. When breaking down of the barriers has been accomplished, one reaches absorption.”¹

Loving kindness embraces all sentient beings. Compassion embraces unfortunate beings. Sympathetic joy embraces the happy and prosperous. Equanimity embraces the good and the bad, the loved and the unloved, the pleasant and the unpleasant.

May you all progress in loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

May you grow in *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*.

¹*The Path of Purification*, Chapter IX, ¶ 43.

May you be free from desire and clinging, free from hatred and aversion, free from ignorance and wrong view.

May you all be fully Awakened!

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**A NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR,
SAYAGYI U CHIT TIN (SADDHAMMA JOTIKA DHAJA)**

Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja Sayagyi U Chit Tin and his wife Mahā Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja Sayamagyi Daw Mya Thwin are the eminent disciples of Sayagyi U Ba Khin who both learned Vipassanā meditation under their teacher beginning in 1950–51. They both served their teacher from 1953 until his death in January 1971, helping and assisting in teaching Myanmar nationals and foreigners who came to the International Meditation Centre (IMC), Yangon, Myanmar. They continued to teach the Dhamma at IMC-Yangon until 1978. They left Myanmar in October 1978, after being invited to teach in the West. They settled in the United Kingdom, founding IMC-UK in 1979. To date, they have established five International Meditation Centres, the four others being: IMC-Western Australia, IMC-Eastern Australia, IMC-USA, and IMC-Austria. Each centre has a Dhamma Yaung Chi Ceti (Light of the Dhamma Pagoda) based on the same design as the original Dhamma Yaung Chi Ceti at IMC-Yangon.

U Chit Tin joined the Accountant General's office in 1950 as Divisional Accountant working under his teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin. He was promoted and transferred to the Union Buddha Sāsana Council in 1952 as Chief Accountant. Thray Sithu Sayagyi U Ba Khin was an Executive Member and the Honorary Auditor of the Council while serving as the first Accountant General after Myanmar (then called Burma) gained independence in 1948.

Preparations for the Sixth Buddhist Synod began in late 1952, and as the opening date in May 1954 grew near, Sayagyi U Ba Khin and U Chit Tin, among others, were fully occupied with serving as host to all the Buddhist countries of Thailand, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and Laos. U Chit Tin was also given the duties of printing and publishing all the edited Tipiṭaka Pāḷi Texts, Commentaries, and Sub-Commentaries, both in Pāḷi and in Myanmar translations. He worked at this task from 1958 to 1978, with one break, retiring in May 1978.

In May 1956, Sayagyi U Chit Tin was awarded the civil service title of “Wunna Kyaw Htin,” and he was awarded the religious title of “Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja” in January 1996 for his services in promoting and propagating the Buddha-Dhamma, which was also the primary objective and lifetime endeavour of his Dhamma Teacher, Sayagyi U Ba Khin. The religious title is a fitting tribute to Sayagyi U Ba Khin's worldwide Dhamma mission.